

# THE BROOD OF FALSE LORRAINE

THE HISTORY OF THE DUCS DE GUISE  
(1496—1588)

BY

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WITH 24 ILLUSTRATIONS

"There rode the brood of false Lorraine, the curses of our land."

MACAULAY *Ivry*.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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# THE BROOD OF FALSE LORRAINE

## CHAPTER XXI

Henri de Lorraine, third Duc de Guise—Ineffaceable impression made upon him by the tragic death of his father—He and his relatives demand “justice against the Admiral,” but the investigation is skilfully evaded by Catherine—The young duke vows the most implacable hatred against Coligny—Boyhood of Henri de Lorraine—His appearance and character—He serves against the Turks in Hungary—Formal reconciliation of the Guises and Châtillons—The Second War of Religion breaks out—Unsuccessful attempt of the Protestants to seize the person of the King—Cowardice of the Cardinal de Lorraine—Massacre of the Catholics at Nîmes—Battle of Saint-Denis—Death of the Constable—The young Duc de Guise outwitted and repulsed by Coligny—Peace of Longjumeau—Strong Catholic reaction—Catherine determines on the ruin of Protestantism—Orders issued for the arrest of Condé and Coligny, who, however, succeed in effecting their escape—The Third War of Religion begins—Battle of Jarnac—Death of Condé—Imprudent conduct of Guise at Jagenueil and Roche-Abeille—Stinging rebuke administered to him by Tavannes—He rehabilitates his reputation by his brilliant defence of Poitiers and becomes a popular hero—He is wounded at Moncontour—Peace of Saint-Germain.

At the time of the tragic death of François de Lorraine, his eldest son Henri, Prince de Joinville,<sup>1</sup> who succeeded not only to his title and estates, but to all his offices, which comprised those of Grand Master, Grand Chamberlain, and Governor of Champagne and Brie, was only in his fourteenth year. Although so young, he had

<sup>1</sup> By his marriage with Anne d'Este, François de Lorraine had had five children: (1) Henri, Prince de Joinville, third Duc de Guise, born December 31, 1550. (2) Catherine Marie, born July 1552; married to Louis, Duc de Montpensier. (3) Charles, Marquis, afterwards Duc, de Mayenne, born March 1554. (4) Louis, Cardinal de Guise, born July 1555. (5) François, born December 1558; died October 1573.



accompanied "*le Balafre*" in his last campaign, and at the siege of Orléans had on more than one occasion given proof of that cool intrepidity for which he was later to become remarkable.

Henri de Lorraine had idolised his celebrated father, and the latter's death, in the prime of life and at the height of his military reputation, by the hand of an assassin, had made an impression on the lad's imagination which was never to be effaced. The brutal frankness of Coligny's justification exasperated him to the last degree, and he had no hesitation in accepting the wild and contradictory assertions of a half-crazy criminal against the Admiral's word of honour. His relatives were of the same mind, and in the following September, as Charles IX and the Queen-mother were leaving the church at Meulan, where they had been hearing vespers, they encountered a long procession, headed by the Duchesse Antoinette and the Duchesse Anne, the mother and widow of the murdered hero, dressed in the deepest mourning, and including all the princes of the House of Guise, likewise clad in black, who, prostrating themselves at their feet, demanded "justice against the Admiral for the death of the late Duc de Guise."

The King promised that he would attend to their petition; but, after much discussion, the inquiry was postponed for three years, by which time, Catherine explained, the King would be old enough to conduct it himself. Catherine, in fact, had not the slightest intention of allowing the Crown to be associated with the Guises' desire for vengeance, and the postponement was merely a pretext to disembarass herself of their importunities.

The young duke complained loudly of the affront which had been put upon him; but he received little encouragement from his relatives to persist in his demands. The ideas of his grandmother, Antoinette de Bourbon, were limited by the walls of the château, or, at any rate, of the town of Joinville; the most important object, in

her eyes, was the extirpation of heresy among her vassals. One of them, a certain M. de Raynel, who had served in the cavalry of Condé, having had the imprudence to return to Joinville after the Peace of Amboise, the old lady promptly caused him to be hanged. His mother, after her first steps against Coligny, had decided that a living lover was of more importance than a dead husband, and was employing all her influence to prevent the Duc de Nemours from making an honest woman of Mlle. Françoise de Rohan, one of the Queen's maids-of-honour, who had yielded to the fascinating duke under a promise of marriage. Henri de Lorraine alone preserved his grief in all its bitterness, and vowed that he would never rest content until he had avenged blood by blood. Andelot came, with a splendid retinue, to marry the dame d'Assenteville, a wealthy neighbour of the duke, and for three days and nights the boy heard the sound of the marriage fêtes. He regarded the presence of Coligny's brother so near to him as an intolerable affront, and his wrath knew no bounds. "Would that I had an arquebus," he cried, "to fire upon these villains!"

Henri de Lorraine had passed his earliest years at Joinville, under the care of his grandmother, the Duchesse Antoinette. Since her husband's death, Antoinette had led a life of almost cloistral seclusion. Her days were spent in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; she had her coffin made and placed in the gallery which connected the château with the chapel, and when her children and grandchildren would have embraced her, she rebuked them "for wishing to embrace a handful of dry dust." The ascetic severity of his surroundings did not, however, exercise any influence upon the young heir of the House of Guise, who listened greedily to the reports of his father's military exploits which from time to time reached the château and pined for the day when he would be old enough to accompany him to the wars. "I have heard," he wrote to his father when six years old,

"some fine sermons from my uncle at Rheims [the Cardinal de Lorraine], but I cannot repeat them to you, for I assure you they were so long that I don't remember half that he said. He made me put on his robe and asked me if I would not like to be a canon of Rheims; but I said I would rather be with you, breaking a lance or sword on some brave Spaniard, to try the strength of my arm; for I would rather break lances than be shut up in an abbey in a monk's frock. . . . I have been rather good lately. . . . You told my grandmother I was obstinate; but Fossé proves just the contrary, for, if I were, he would certainly thrash me."

From Joinville, the boy was sent to Paris, to study at the College of Navarre, where the two other Henris of Valois and Bourbon were his schoolfellows. But after the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis brought his father back to Court, the little Prince de Joinville became his constant companion, and the precocious interest with which he followed the course of public events, and the craving for mastery which he began to display, are said to have occasioned Guise no little uneasiness.<sup>1</sup>

François de Lorraine had been thin and dark, with a complexion almost olive; but his son favoured his Borgian ancestry and had Lucrezia's blue eyes and yellow curls. To their delicate beauty and southern grace he united a commanding stature and extraordinary physical strength. He excelled in all manly exercises: horsemanship, swimming, tennis, the use of arms. His manners were charming; he had a smile and a pleasant word for all, rich and poor alike, and would converse as readily with the tradesman at his shop-door, or the artisan at his toil, as with the noble at the Court; while his liberality was such that it was said that he was the greatest usurer in France, since every one was in his

<sup>1</sup> René de Bouillé, though he does not give his authority, declares that François de Lorraine had so accurately gauged his son's character that he predicted that he would meet his death in an attempt to subvert the kingdom

debt, either for monetary assistance or for some favour received.

Guise had undoubtedly great gifts : dauntless courage, untiring energy, a remarkable keenness of perception, a rare sagacity in estimating character, and a wonderful aptitude for the management of affairs. But they were discounted by grave faults. His ambition was boundless, and he was quite unscrupulous as to the means he employed to attain his ends ; he was wanting in patience and foresight ; and, like his uncle, the crafty Cardinal de Lorraine, he carried dissimulation to its farthest limits.

In 1566, the young duke, either to escape the marriage of his mother with her old lover Nemours, of which he strongly disapproved, or in the hope of acquiring military renown and commending himself to the Catholics by his prowess in a crusade, set out for Hungary to fight the Turks. At Vienna, he was the object of many polite attentions, particularly from the Spanish Ambassador, Chantonnay, the former confidant of his uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the discreet depositary of the engagements of his family with Philip II. But the inaction of the Imperial forces afforded him no opportunity of distinction, and in the spring of the following year he returned to France.

Shortly before his departure for Vienna, Catherine had persuaded the Duc d'Aumale and the Duchesse Anne to consent to a formal reconciliation with the Admiral. It took place at Moulins, in January 1566, and, after Coligny had once more solemnly affirmed, " as in the presence of God and on his honour," that he had had no share, direct or indirect, in the assassination of François de Lorraine, the Guises and Châtillons embraced one another, to the great satisfaction of Catherine, who was thus able to pose as a peacemaker between the most powerful subjects in the kingdom, while knowing that there would be no difficulty in reopening the quarrel, should it serve her purpose to do so. For the reconciliation was a merely formal one ;

and the young Duc de Guise did not take part in it, and remained at full liberty to avenge his murdered sire when the opportunity should present itself.

In September 1567, the second War of Religion broke out. The Huguenots were not now, as at the moment of their first revolt in 1562, the victims of massacres *en masse* or of legal executions. It is true that in many places they were harshly treated, despoiled of their property, interrupted in the exercise of their religion, and even sometimes murdered. But these things were the inevitable consequence of religious divisions at an epoch when passions were ardent and convictions energetic. The Protestants did not hesitate to attack the Catholics, in their turn, in those districts in which they were the stronger, and showed themselves, so soon as they had the power, as intolerant as their adversaries. Oppression always teaches cruelty; the persecuted desires not only to become free, but to be himself the persecutor. It was the interest, as well as the duty of the Reformers, to profit by the religious indifference of the Queen-mother, the tolerant education given to the young King and the temporary eclipse of the Guises to endure with patience the outrages to which they were still subjected in Catholic districts, to conduct themselves with moderation where they held the upper hand, and to employ all their efforts to consolidate the royal power and show themselves the surest supporters of the throne against the intrigues of Spain. Had they adopted this course, it is almost certain that in time their situation would have been greatly ameliorated; but, alarmed by false reports of what had taken place between Catherine and Alva at the interview of Bayonne (June 14—July 2, 1565)<sup>1</sup> by the boastings of the Car-

<sup>1</sup> At Bayonne, Alva endeavoured to prevail upon Charles IX and Catherine to enter into a treaty with Philip II for the extirpation of the Protestants both in France and the Netherlands; and some Protestant historians go so far as to assert that it was here that the project of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was first determined on. But contemporary



dinal de Lorraine, and by Philip II's preparations against the Flemish Reformers, they concluded that they were about to be made the dupes of the Queen-mother and to be enveloped with their co-religionists in the Netherlands in one vast proscription. Their worst fears appeared to be confirmed by the refusal of the Government to disband a force of 6,000 Swiss mercenaries, which had been raised to protect the eastern frontier from any aggression on the part of the Spanish troops marching from Italy to the Netherlands; in September, their chiefs met in council at Valery and Châtillon, and, though Coligny pleaded eloquently for peace, he was overruled, and it was resolved to seize the person of the King, to capture some of the stronger towns, and to fall upon and annihilate the Swiss. Rozay, in Brie, was selected as the rendezvous. Nothing could have been more maladroit than this second revolt, which destroyed the last chance of an agreement between the rival parties before the complete exhaustion of the country; while the unfortunate idea of carrying off the King, not only prejudiced their cause in the eyes of all moderate men, but incensed against them Charles IX, hitherto inclined to regard his Protestant subjects with sympathy.

The first move in this desperate game was within an ace of being successful. The Court was at the Château of Monceaux, in Brie, occupied with fêtes and hunting-parties, when the Sieur de Castelnau, whom Charles IX had despatched on a political mission to Brussels, arrived with intelligence that the Huguenots were everywhere preparing to rise in arms. The King was at first incredulous, and l'Hôpital declared that "it was a capital offence to give a false warning to a prince which might cause him to distrust his subjects."<sup>1</sup> However, a few days later, word was brought that armed men were

documents, such as Alva's own letters and the papers of Cardinal de Granvelle, clearly prove that the proposals of the terrible general were very coldly received by Catherine, and that he was given nothing but the vaguest assurances.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Castelnau.*

patrolling all the neighbouring roads, and that a body of cavalry was encamped in a wood in which his Majesty had announced his intention of hunting on the following morning. In great alarm, Charles despatched messengers to Château-Thierry to summon the Swiss, who were stationed there, to his succour; and on September 22 the Court quitted Monceaux and threw itself into the town of Meaux. The Swiss arrived at midnight on the 24th, and, on the advice of their commander Pfeiffer, who pledged himself "to make a lane for their Majesties through the army of their enemies," it was resolved to retire on Paris. Accordingly, at daybreak on the 28th, they left Meaux, the Swiss marching in the form of a square, with the Royal Family in their midst, while the gentlemen of the Court and their servants formed the advance- and rear-guard of the cortège.

The Cardinal de Lorraine had not the same confidence as his Sovereign in the living walls formed by the Swiss; he preferred to trust to those of solid masonry, and fled towards Rheims in disguise. In passing through Château-Thierry, he fell in with a troop of Huguenots, from whom he only escaped thanks to the swiftness of an Arab horse, a present from Philip II, leaving all his servants, baggage, and silver plate in the hands of the enemy. Such was his craven terror that he continued to spur his horse until he found himself safe within the walls of Rheims.

At Lagny, the Court found its road barred by the Huguenot cavalry under Condé and Coligny; but the latter, which, according to Protestant writers, did not number more than five or six hundred, were not as yet in sufficient force to risk an engagement, and recoiled before the resolute attitude of the Swiss, who, "lowering their pikes, ran at them like mad dogs, at full speed." And so, guarded by foreign mercenaries from the wrath of his rebellious subjects, Charles IX reached his capital, burning with shame and indignation at the extremity to which he had been reduced.

His indignation was increased by the bad news which arrived from the provinces : the insurrection was general. The Protestants had surprised Montereau, Nîmes, and Orléans. At Nîmes, they drove into the courtyard of the bishop's palace the principal Catholics of the city, and all the monks and priests upon whom they could contrive to lay hands, to the number of some eighty persons, and butchered them in cold blood. Dead and dying were thrown into the wells, and earth flung over them.

Exasperated beyond measure, the King, on the advice of his mother, decided to demand help of Philip of Spain against his subjects ; and thus it happened that the Reformers, by their ill-advised revolt, assured that union with Spain which they had so much cause to dread and which the conference at Bayonne had failed to bring about. Foreign troops once more entered France, and all the miseries of the previous war reappeared.

Meanwhile, the Protestants, having been reinforced, had occupied Saint-Denis, and, after some fruitless *pourparlers* with the Court, they proceeded, with astonishing daring, to blockade Paris, although their army does not appear to have exceeded 6,000 men, and was without a single piece of artillery ; while the Constable, with a vastly superior force, lay within the city. Montmorency, however, who had always carried caution to excess, was disinclined to take the offensive, and though the citizens, furious at finding their supplies from Normandy and elsewhere cut off and the markets empty, clamoured for a sortie *en masse*, he refused to risk an engagement, until the necessity of opposing the advance of a Spanish corps from the Netherlands had compelled the Huguenots to detach a considerable part of their slender forces, under Andelot and Montgomery, to occupy Poissy and Pontoise.

The Royal army was nearly 20,000 strong ; that of Condé certainly did not exceed 3,000 men ; but the prince had no thought of declining battle, and ranged



his little force in the plain of Saint-Denis. The Catholic attack was repulsed all along the line; and then, while Coligny, at the head of 500 horse, fell upon the Parisian militia, who, arrayed in all their martial finery—"gilded like chalices," as a Huguenot historian puts it<sup>1</sup>—formed the left wing of the Royalists, and drove them in head-long rout towards the city, Condé, with the bulk of the Huguenot cavalry, burst suddenly upon the centre, where the Constable commanded in person. So furious was his charge that the Catholic cavalry was broken and hurled back, and the Constable himself wounded and unhorsed. A Scotsman, Robert Stuart by name, summoned him to surrender; but, for all response, the old warrior, "abandoned by his followers, but not by his valour," struck him in the mouth with the pommel of his broken sword. The Scotsman thereupon fired a pistol at him, and the ball shattered Montmorency's spine. Two of the Constable's sons, Damville and Thoré, succeeded in extricating their father from the *mêlée* and conveying him back to Paris, where he died two days later, at the age of seventy-four.

Although the Parisians had taken to flight, and the Catholic cavalry had been flung back in disorder, the main body of the Royal army was unbroken. The Maréchal de Montmorency assumed the command and rallied the shattered squadrons, and the Huguenots were being hard pressed on all sides, when the failing light came to their assistance and enabled them to fall back in tolerable order on Saint-Denis. The Royalists, disheartened by the fall of their leader, did not attempt to pursue, and, after occupying the field of battle for a few hours in token of victory, re-entered Paris.

Forced to withdraw from before Paris by the approach of the Spanish troops, the Protestants proceeded along the valley of the Seine to join the German auxiliaries whom the Elector Palatine, Frederick III, was sending. To prevent this junction, the Duc d'Aumale was des-

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné.

patched to the eastern frontier, and encamped with his army near Troyes. Aumale brought with him his nephew, the young Duc de Guise, who wished to receive instruction in the art of war under his orders. It was, however, Coligny who gave this lesson to the son of his former rival.

Aumale detached Guise with a part of his forces to prevent the Huguenots from crossing the Seine; but, deceived by a feint against Sens, the young prince hastened to throw himself into the place. Upon learning this, Coligny promptly retraced his steps and crossed the river a little higher up; and, while Guise was congratulating himself on having forced the Admiral to abandon his plans, he learned how neatly he had been outwitted. Indignant at the trick which had been played upon him, he pursued the enemy, imprudently engaged him with a greatly inferior force, and was obliged to retreat with considerable loss. His error was excused on account of his youth and inexperience, but it was, none the less, an unfortunate beginning.

The Protestants having effected their junction with their allies, turned again towards Paris, and, at the end of February 1568, laid siege to Chartres. Negotiations for peace had, however, already begun, and a month later (March 23), the Peace of Longjumeau, which reaffirmed the Edict of Amboise, put an end to the second war.

The Peace of Longjumeau was merely a truce. The ill-advised Protestant revolt of 1567, and particularly the attempt to seize the person of the King, had ruined the influence of the party of toleration. Michel de l'Hôpital had lost all credit. He had so many times declared himself ready to guarantee the loyalty of the Huguenots that the more fanatical Catholics went so far as to accuse him of complicity. He retired to his estate of Le Vignay, and on May 24, 1568, was deprived of the Seals.

A strong Catholic reaction now set in, and the Old

Religion everywhere assumed the offensive and inaugurated a vigorous propaganda against the Reformed opinions. It sent out the old mendicant Orders, so powerful among the people, and the Jesuits, skilful in influencing the great. Monks and priests "visited the towns, the villages, and the houses of private persons, warning every one against the doctrine of the Protestants, and accusing them of desiring to set at defiance all laws both human and divine." This appeal to loyalty and the spirit of tradition produced speedy results. Leagues were organised for the defence of the Catholic religion. Armed confraternities enrolled in their ranks men of every condition to combat heresy. Tavannes, Lieutenant-General of the King in Burgundy, had already founded one at Dijon in 1567, and he now created others at Bourges, at Châlons, and in almost every town in Burgundy, under the name of the "Confraternities of the Holy Spirit." That of Autun was placed under the invocation of the Holy Cross, in remembrance of the ancient crusades against the Infidel. The members, "in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and by the communion of His precious body and blood," contracted a "fraternity," for the purpose of "sustaining with all their power the Church of God, and maintaining the ancient faith and the King, their natural Sovereign and very Christian lord." They promised one another mutual and secret assistance. They swore obedience and fidelity to the King. Tavannes saw in these free associations a means of organising the Catholics and of keeping them always ready for war. It was to turn against the Huguenots their own system of voluntary association and mobilisation, "to oppose one intelligence against another intelligence, league against league."

Catherine was only too ready to avail herself of their co-operation. At the beginning of the Wars of Religion, though compelled to lend her name to the Catholic leaders, she had been careful not to allow herself to be identified too closely with their objects, and had laboured

to hold the balance between the parties. But when the King of Navarre and the Triumvirate were dead, and there was no one to dispute her direction of the Catholic party, which, she recognised, was by far the stronger of the two, and commanded the support of the great mass of the people, she determined to place herself at its head and to re-establish unity in the kingdom by the ruin of Protestantism.

The Guises, who, since the death of François de Lorraine, had been in a kind of semi-disgrace, so that the Cardinal de Lorraine, on his return from the Council of Trent, was obliged to wait two whole hours for an audience of the King, now resumed the first rank at Court and in the council-chamber. The cardinal flattered Catherine assiduously in her blind affection for her second son, Henri, Duc d'Anjou, "whom she made her idol, wishing to content him in everything that he desired of her," and promised to persuade the clergy to give him a pension of 200,000 francs. The Catholic reaction desired to have a prince at its head who should be entirely devoted to its passions, and Catherine was delighted that this *rôle* should be confided to the favourite among her children. Maternal ambition and party spirit were at one in their desire to confer upon the King's eldest brother a unique position in the State.

The outrages against the Protestants were resumed; indeed, the peace only existed in the text of the edict of pacification, and in almost every town where the Catholics predominated the populace, supported more or less ostensibly by the royal officers, forcibly opposed the exercise of the Reformed religion. The Duc de Nemours, Governor of the Lyonnais and Dauphiné, refused places of assembly to the Protestants of Lyons and Grenoble. The Parlement of Toulouse went much further, and actually caused a gentleman named Rapin, who came, in the name of the King, to order them to register the edict, to be arrested, tried, and condemned to death, for having taken part, in 1562, in the troubles at Toulouse.

The pulpits resounded with incitements to murder. The Jesuits taught, with the authority of their new vogue, that there ought to be neither peace nor truce with heretics; that to put them to death was a thing agreeable to God, and that there was no obligation to keep faith with them. Every day came the news of new assassinations, of new massacres; at Amiens, 100 Huguenots were done to death; at Auxerre, 150. Blood was shed in a score of other cities; and the more fanatical Catholics boasted openly that, so soon as the harvest and the vintage were finished, there would be a general slaughter of heretics, and that "if the King endeavoured to prevent it, they would shut him up in a convent and instal another in his place." This "other" was apparently the Duc d'Anjou.

The Government closed its eyes to these outrages. It was its revenge against a party which it regarded, not only as heretics, but as rebels. In point of fact, the Protestants had been in no haste to surrender the towns which they had occupied during the war; Montauban, Sancerre, Albi, and other places closed their gates against the royal garrisons which were sent to them; and La Rochelle, which in the previous January had declared for Condé, and was to remain henceforth the great stronghold of French Protestantism, consented to receive the governor whom the King had appointed, but not the soldiers whom he brought with him.

Towards the end of August, Catherine, stimulated perhaps by the example of Alva, who had caused Egmont and Horn, the leaders of the opposition to Spanish tyranny, to be arrested, tried, and beheaded, persuaded Charles IX to issue orders for the arrest of Condé and Coligny, who were then at the former's château of Noyers, in Burgundy. Warned in time, they succeeded in effecting their escape with their families, traversed the whole breadth of France, and gained the sheltering walls of La Rochelle, where they were joined by Jeanne d'Albret and her young son, Henri of Navarre.



The third War of Religion began forthwith, and was conducted with pitiless cruelty on both sides.<sup>1</sup> The results of the autumn campaign of 1568 were favourable to the Protestants, who mastered almost all the South and West. But, with the New Year, their fortunes changed. In February, Condé and Coligny, with the main Huguenot army, marched eastwards to join their German allies, who were advancing from the Rhine. Finding, however, that Tavannes, who directed the Catholics, in the name of the Duc d'Anjou, had divined this movement and was preparing to oppose it, they turned to the South-West, with the intention of effecting their junction with the Huguenot forces from Quercy. Tavannes, however, barred their way, upon which they decided to turn to the North, seize one of the passages of the Loire, and join hands with the Germans. But Tavannes outmarched them, crossed the Charente, by a stratagem, and fell upon the rearguard of the Huguenots, under Coligny, near Jarnac.

Warned of the Admiral's danger, Condé hurried to his succour with 300 horse, bidding the rest of his troops to follow with all speed. "For," says La Noue, "he had the heart of a lion, and, whenever he heard that there was fighting, he longed to be in the thick of it." On his arrival on the field, he found Coligny struggling against almost the entire Catholic army and in danger of being surrounded. An immediate retreat would have been the wisest course, but to this the prince refused to consent, and, drawing up the cavalry in a long line, with himself and his little band in the centre, he proposed to charge the dense columns of the enemy. A day or two before, his left arm had been badly crushed by a fall from his horse, and now, as his helmet was being adjusted, his right leg was broken by a kick from the charger of his brother-in-law, the Comte de la Rochefoucauld. "You see," said he, mastering the pain,

<sup>1</sup> "In the first war," writes d'Aubigné, "we fought like angels; in the second, like men; in the third, like devils."

"that mettlesome horses are of more harm than use in an army."

Those about him urged him to dismount, and to take no part in the charge; but he refused to leave the saddle, and, pointing first to his injured limbs and then to his standard, which bore the device: "*Pro Christo et patriâ, dulce periculum*," he cried: "Nobles of France, behold the moment so long desired! Remember in what plight Louis de Bourbon goes into battle for Christ and country!"

Then, with his 300 horse, he threw himself on the Catholic cavalry and drove them back in confusion on the *bataille*, which the Duc d'Anjou led in person. But the charges of Coligny, on the right, and Montgomery, on the left, failed completely, and the prince's little troop was soon assailed on all sides by overwhelming numbers. Condé's horse was killed under him, and, impeded by his injuries, he was unable to mount another. His followers gathered round him and fought on heroically, but one by one they were cut down, until the prince found himself almost alone. Nevertheless, with his back against a tree and kneeling on one knee, he continued to defend himself; but his strength was failing, and, perceiving two Catholic gentlemen to whom he had once been of service, he offered to surrender to them. The two gentlemen dismounted, and, with several others, formed a circle round Condé, promising to protect his life with their own. Scarcely, however, had they done so, when Anjou's guards passed by, and their captain, "a very brave and honourable gentleman, called Montesquiou,"<sup>1</sup> learning the identity of the prisoner, wheeled his horse, galloped up to the group, and, shouting: "Kill! *Mordieu!* Kill!" drew a pistol from his holster and shot the prince through the head from behind, killing him instantly.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

<sup>2</sup> By the orders of his master, it was generally believed. "He" [Condé], writes Brantôme, "had been very earnestly recommended to several of

Coligny succeeded in effecting his escape, and rejoined the main body of the army, which had not been engaged. In this country, intersected by rivers and deep ditches, and where the Reformers were in possession of several strong places, he was able to make head against the enemy, who did not dare to advance.

On learning of the death of Condé, Jeanne d'Albret left La Rochelle and hastened to the Huguenot camp at Tonnay-Charente, bringing with her the young Prince de Condé, son of the murdered hero, and her own son, the Prince de Béarn, aged respectively fifteen and sixteen, and, in an eloquent speech, presented them to the troops, and made each of them swear "on his honour, soul, and life" never to abandon the cause. The army received them with acclamations, and the young Prince de Béarn was forthwith chosen as its leader; while, as a mark of respect and gratitude for the hero whom it had lost, the new Prince de Condé was associated with him in command. For more than two years the double signature, "Henri, Henri de Bourbon," appeared at the foot of the official documents of the Reformed party. But, though always accompanied by the two young princes, and nominally acting as their lieutenant and counsellor, Coligny had henceforth the individual command of the Protestant army, as well as the principal voice in determining the policy of his party; and, by the camp-fire, the lads were commonly referred to as "the Admiral's pages." Nevertheless, their presence in the Huguenot army gave a kind of legality to the revolt,

the favourites of the said *Monseigneur* [Anjou] whom I knew." Any way, Anjou was certainly responsible for the shameful indignity with which the body of the murdered prince was treated. "The same night that the battle was fought," writes Davila, "the Duc d'Anjou, pursuing the enemy victoriously, entered into Jarnac, whither the body of the prince was carried in triumph on the back of a miserable ass, to the infinite joy and diversion of the whole army, which made a jest of this spectacle, though, while he lived, they were terrified at the name of so great a man." For two whole days it lay exposed to the effects of the air and the vulgar insults of Anjou and his creatures, and was then handed over to Condé's brother-in-law, the Duc de Longueville, who caused it to be interred in the ancestral vault at Vendôme.



in opposing to the King, led astray by evil counsellors, the Princes of the Blood, defenders of the State and the Crown, and protectors of the King against himself.

This campaign, so favourable to the Catholics, brought nothing but reverses to the young Duc de Guise. When, in the previous autumn, the Duc d'Anjou had taken command of the Royal army, with Tavannes to direct his operations, both princes and marshal found themselves gravely embarrassed by the young nobles who flocked to their standard to volunteer their services, without the most rudimentary notions of tactics or discipline. Of these Guise was by far the worst offender. Having arrived one of the first at Orléans, where the army had assembled, he had succeeded in obtaining from the Comte de Sansac, who commanded temporarily, pending the arrival of Anjou and Tavannes, the command of eighteen companies of men-at-arms ; and, though Anjou was highly indignant at so imprudent an appointment, he was obliged to confirm it. The young duke, by his *élan*, his audacity, and his ardour, was at once hailed as a chief after their own hearts by the young nobles, who ridiculed the caution of the old generals, despised the infantry, and ignored the order of battle and even the authority of Anjou, regarded by them as altogether too docile to the counsels of Tavannes. To this veteran campaigner the eighteen-year-old Duc de Guise, impatient to emulate the exploits of his celebrated father, was preferred, and on several occasions the safety of the army was compromised by the reckless impatience which carried him, at all risks, into the van of battle. In November 1568, near Jageneuil, when the Calvinists were slowly retreating before the royal troops, through a country covered with vineyards. Guise, contrary to the orders of Anjou, suddenly charged them at the head of the cavalry, without even observing a deep and wide ditch which the Huguenots had dug between the two armies. Compelled to check their

horses suddenly on the edge of this obstacle, and decimated by the fire of arquebusiers and artillery, his squadrons were thrown into hopeless confusion; and, the Protestant cavalry having charged them in flank, they would have been totally destroyed, if the whole Catholic army had not been hurriedly brought up to their support.

So far from profiting by this sad experience, the young duke committed a similar blunder at Jarnac, though, fortunately for himself, with less serious consequences, and the reverse of Roche-Abeille, in June 1569, was chiefly due to his insubordination. Without orders, he and the Sieur de Martigues led a force of 200 horse across the stream that divided them from the Huguenot position, and they were followed, also without orders, by a regiment of infantry. Suddenly confronted by the Huguenot cavalry, 4,000 strong, the men-at-arms broke and fled, leaving the foot-soldiers to bear the brunt of the charge. The latter, refusing to surrender, were almost annihilated, every one of their officers being killed. Anjou and Tavannes were furious, as well they might be. "I said very truly," cried the latter, "that these young men would spoil everything"; and when Guise appeared before him weary and confused, the old soldier greeted him with words of stinging reproach. "Monsieur," he exclaimed, "before acting, it is necessary to think. It would have been more praiseworthy, on your part, to have taken your own life than to act as you have done!"<sup>1</sup>

However, before many weeks had passed Guise was destined to do much to obliterate the memory of these errors. Learning that Coligny, profiting by his recent success and the weakness of the Royal army, was about to lay siege to Poitiers, he determined to deliver the town, and demanded permission to hasten thither with all his cavalry. Anjou objected that his army, if deprived of so considerable a force, would be reduced to impotence.

<sup>1</sup> Guillaume de Saulx-Tavannes, *Mémoires*.

The duke replied proudly : "The King has given me the charge of colonel-general of the light horse, and I should be unworthy of it, if I do not do this." Anjou, although very much against his will, thereupon gave him permission to operate between the two hostile camps ; and the first news that he received was that he had thrown himself into Poitiers with all the troops he had brought with him.

This action appeared as imprudent as those which had preceded it, and infinitely less excusable, since the duke was not, on this occasion, able to plead the excitement of battle as an excuse for his disobedience to orders. It was, indeed, one of those undertakings which nothing but complete success can possibly justify.

Poitiers was as weakly fortified as Metz had been when François de Lorraine had arrived to undertake its defence. The walls were in a most dilapidated condition, and it was dominated on all sides by heights, which exposed the inhabitants to the risk of being killed in the streets. Moreover, the besiegers, and particularly the German portion of them, were inspired to the most strenuous exertions by the prospect of the rich booty which success would place in their hands. For all the Catholic nobility of Poitou was shut up in the town with Guise and his brother, the Marquis, afterwards the Duc, de Mayenne, and the ransoms of so many important persons would alone amount to an enormous sum.

On his side, Guise showed that, if he had not inherited the prudence which had tempered his father's valour in the field, he certainly possessed all his energy and resourcefulness, as well as his power of animating those under his command with that confidence and courage which enables them to contend successfully against apparently insuperable difficulties. The cavalry which he had introduced into the place enabled him to delay the investment and to prolong the defence of the faubourgs ; and, when the investment was at length

completed, to harass the enemy by continual sorties and cut off their supplies. Thus, though the garrison and the inhabitants were soon reduced to considerable straits from lack of food, the besiegers suffered from the same cause. Their army, too, was not organised for a siege of long duration, for they possessed neither heavy artillery, an adequate supply of ammunition, nor sufficient engineers; and when they had succeeded in making a breach, they were unable to follow up their advantage. The only assault that they ventured to deliver was repulsed with considerable loss, owing to the cowardice of their German mercenaries, who abandoned their brave paymasters at the critical moment; and at the beginning of September—the investment had been completed at the end of July—the Admiral was glad of the excuse offered him in the attack of the Royal forces on Châtellerault to raise the siege.

In the admiration evoked by the defence of Poitiers, the faults committed by Guise earlier in the war were quickly forgotten, or rather the impetuous valour which had occasioned them was set down to his credit, while the losses they had entailed were overlooked. “M. de Guise and his brother acquired great renown for having defended so weak a place, being still so young as they were; and this action was esteemed not less highly than that of Metz.”

Henri de Lorraine, indeed, was now freely compared with his father. He was given a seat in the Council. He saw himself welcomed with enthusiastic acclamations, when he rejoined the army, at the head of his brave cavalry from Poitiers. He had atoned for his former follies, and had no longer to fear remonstrances such as Tavannes had addressed to him. At eighteen, he was a popular hero and a power in the kingdom.

It was certainly well for Guise that his brilliant defence of Poitiers had so firmly established his reputation, since, a month later, in the sanguinary battle of Moncontour, he almost neutralised the great superiority of the Catholics

in both men and artillery by another of his impetuous cavalry charges. Hitherto, it had been his unfortunate men who had paid for the young duke's rashness, and he himself had suffered only in reputation. But he was not so fortunate on this occasion, being "severely wounded by a pistol-ball in the lower part of the leg, and in great danger of death."<sup>1</sup> He was obliged, in consequence, to keep his bed for three months, and took no further part in the war, which was terminated on August 8, 1570, by the Peace of Saint-Germain, which secured to the Protestants, nominally at least, infinitely greater concessions than any which they had yet obtained.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

<sup>2</sup> The Protestants received a general amnesty and the restoration of their confiscated estates. They were admitted on equal terms with their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects to the benefit of all public institutions. They were permitted to appeal from the judgment of the notoriously hostile Parlement of Toulouse to the Cour des Requêtes, in Paris. Finally, they were permitted to retain possession of four towns which they had conquered: La Rochelle, Cognac, La Charité, and Montauban, as a guarantee of the King's good faith, on condition that Henri of Navarre and Condé bound themselves to restore them to the Crown two years after the faithful execution of the Peace.

## CHAPTER XXII

Enmity of Henri de Valois, Duc d'Anjou, against Guise—Its causes—Proposals for the marriage of Guise—Marguerite de Valois—Her beauty, elegance, and intelligence—Her affection for Guise—Perfidious conduct of Anjou—Nature of the relations between Guise and the princess considered—The young duke's pretensions supported by his uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine—Interview between the Queen-mother and the cardinal—An intercepted love-letter laid before Catherine and Charles IX—Fury of the King, who orders his half-brother, Henri d'Angoulême, to assassinate Guise—Intervention of Marguerite and the Duchess of Lorraine—Angry scenes at the Louvre between Charles IX and Guise—The duke, to appease the royal anger, renounces his pretensions to Marguerite's hand, and marries the Princesse de Porcien—Anjou's threat—Consequences of this affair.

If the Duc de Guise had made a name for himself during the war which had just concluded, he had, at the same time, made something with which he could very well have dispensed, to wit, a most dangerous, unscrupulous, and vindictive enemy, in the person of his Commander-in-Chief, the Duc d'Anjou. From early boyhood this young prince had cherished against the House of Guise, whose ambition and audacity he had instinctively divined, those sentiments of hatred and jealousy which, many years later, were to culminate in the tragedy of Blois; and the youthful head of the family was the object of his special antipathy. He had been intensely irritated by the duke's flagrant and continual disregard of his orders during the war, and by the applause which had greeted his exploits on the day of Jarnac, which, in his vanity, he considered ought to have been reserved for himself. At the very moment when he was felicitating himself on becoming the leader of the Catholic party, both in peace and war, a competitor for that honour had suddenly arisen—a competitor who was the idol of the young nobility, the model of the new chivalry, the son of the

greatest captain whom France had possessed for half a century. Such was the military spirit at this epoch that a general suffered but little in his reputation, even when he had sustained the most humiliating reverses, always provided that, like Henri de Lorraine, he had given proof of courage, and had not hesitated to throw himself at the head of his cavalry upon the serried ranks of the enemy. A general, on the other hand, who had, like Henri de Valois, won battles without making any parade of personal valour, was unable to gain the confidence of the army. The soldiers preferred to risk a disaster under a leader who gave his orders from the saddle, sword in hand, rather than to trust themselves to the prudence and foresight of a chief who, "like the Nestor of the Greeks, was an old libertine who did not budge from his tent, and gave his advice and counsels in the manner of a First President of the Parlement."<sup>1</sup>

And there were other reasons for the envy and hatred with which the heir-presumptive to the throne had come to regard the chief of the Guises. The pale, thin, black-haired prince could not but feel, whenever he beheld this blonde giant, a galling sense of his own inferiority—inferiority in courage, both moral and physical, in intellect and ability, in every accomplishment, with the possible exception of dancing, and, worst of all, in personal appearance; for had not the Duchesse de Retz declared that "those Lorraine princes possessed such an air of distinction that other princes appeared plebeian beside them"?

An opportunity of humiliating his rival was not long in presenting itself.

The matter of Guise's marriage had long been occupying the attention of his relatives. It will be remembered that, on his deathbed, François de Lorraine had expressed a wish that his eldest son should marry Catherine d'Albon, the only child of the Maréchal de Saint-André, and one of the greatest heiresses in France. This match, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

had been for some time past regarded as virtually arranged, and, soon after "*le Balafré's*" tragic death, the little girl was confided to the care of Anne d'Este, to be brought up under her supervision, until she should have reached a marriageable age. But the widowed Maréchale de Saint-André, having become violently enamoured of the Prince de Condé, and, having decided that the surest means of subjugating him was to appeal to his interests, suddenly demanded that her daughter should be sent back to her, repudiated her engagements with the Guises, and offered the girl to the prince for his eldest son, the Marquis de Conti, then twelve years old. The Duchesse de Guise, having refused to surrender the prize, the maréchale appealed to the law courts, which decided in favour of the mother; and the little girl was on the point of being formally betrothed to the Marquis de Conti, when the Queen-mother, who had got wind of the project, and had no mind to see the House of Condé thus aggrandized, suddenly intervened and persuaded the King to inform the parents that he should refuse his sanction to the match. "The Prince de Condé has left the Court in anger," runs a letter from Fontainebleau, "because they [Charles IX and Catherine] would not give the daughter of the late Maréchal de Saint-André to his son. He believes that they intend to give her to Guise.. The Constable has gone to fetch him back. Others have gone to fan the flame."<sup>1</sup> Some months later, their Majesties withdrew their objections to the proposed marriage, which, however, never took place, since Mlle. de Saint-André died at the beginning of July 1567.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The little heiress's death, whereby her immense fortune passed to her mother, was freely ascribed to a diabolical crime on the part of the Maréchale de Saint-André, in order to facilitate her union with Condé, whose wife was dying of consumption. There would not appear to have been any foundation for so terrible a charge, though the maréchale, who, besides being desperately enamoured of Condé, was a very ambitious woman, was certainly prepared to move heaven and earth to secure her elevation to the rank of Princess of the Blood.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Almerigo Bor Fadino to Pierre du Bois, merchant of Antwerp, November 13, 1563, State Papers (Elizabeth), Foreign Series.



The Cardinal de Lorraine appears to have had hopes that his eldest nephew might have found a suitable bride during his travels in Germany in 1566. But the young duke wrote to inform him that though, during his visit to Munich, he had seen several young and well-bred princesses, he had not had time to make himself very agreeable to them or think much about marriage. A year later, however, he was reported by the Spanish Ambassador to be paying marked attention to Catherine de Clèves, one of the three beautiful daughters of the Duc de Nevers,<sup>1</sup> and widow of Antoine de Cröy, Prince de Porcien. The Prince de Porcien, whose death, at the early age of twenty-six, had been a great loss to the Huguenot party, had entertained the most violent hatred of the Guises, and, on his death-bed, is said to have thus addressed his wife: "You are young, beautiful, and rich; you will have many suitors when I am gone. I have no objection to your marrying again, if only it be not the Duc de Guise. Let not my worst enemy inherit what, of all my possessions, I have cherished the most." Whether it was respect, on the lady's part, for her husband's dying injunctions, or, as seems more probable, a disinclination on that of Guise to marry too early, is uncertain, but, any way, three years later Catherine de Clèves was still a widow, and Guise had apparently abandoned his suit. However, in the spring of 1570 rumour was once more very busy with the duke's matrimonial intentions, and this time in connection with no less exalted a personage than the King's unmarried sister, Madame Marguerite.

Marguerite de Valois—the celebrated "Queen Margot"—youngest daughter of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici, was at this time just completing her eighteenth year, and, if Brantôme and the other historians and poets who have described her charms are to be believed,

<sup>1</sup> The eldest sister, Henriette, married Ludovico Gonzaga, son of the Duke of Mantua, who assumed the title of Duc de Nevers on the death of his brother-in-law. The youngest daughter, Marie, married Henri I, Prince de Condé.



MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, QUEEN OF NAVARRE ("LA REINE MARGOT")

exquisitely beautiful. She had "a lovely, fair face, that resembled the heavens in their sweetest and calmest serenity, so nobly formed as to cause one to declare that Mother Nature, that very perfect workwoman, had put all her rarest and subtlest into the fashioning of it"; a complexion of dazzling fairness, beautiful blue eyes shaded by long lashes, which shone with an unconscious desire to please, and that native coquetry which rendered her so redoubtable and a superb figure, "of a port and majesty more like to a goddess of heaven than a princess of earth." Her hair, which was very abundant, was black, but, as golden tresses were considered to harmonise best with her complexion, she often concealed it beneath a coiffure of pale-coloured curls. "Nevertheless," writes the enthusiastic Brantôme, "I have seen this magnificent princess wear her own hair without any additional contrivance in the shape of a wig; and, in spite of its being black, like that of her father, King Henri, she knew so well how to curl, frizzle, and arrange it, in imitation of her sister, the Queen of Spain (who wore her own, which was black, like a Spaniard's), that such headdress became her as well, or better, than any other she could invent."<sup>1</sup> A beautiful girl, indeed! But "it was the beauty, sensual and appetising, which attracts and retains men; the beauty 'made to damn us,' as Don Juan of Austria will exclaim later, on beholding her at the Louvre."<sup>2</sup>

Besides being the acknowledged Queen of Beauty, Marguerite was the Queen of Fashion as well; and it was to the example set by her, so Brantôme assures us, that the ladies of the French Court were indebted for the fact that they had become "great ladies, instead of simple mesdames; and so a hundredfold more charming and desirable." Whatever she chose to wear, he con-

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme, *Dames illustres*. Towards the end of her life, Marguerite had no dark hair left and went to great expense in fair wigs. For this purpose she kept several "tall, fair-haired footmen, who were shaved from time to time."

<sup>2</sup> La Ferrière, *Trois Amoureuses du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Marguerite de Valois*.

tinues, elaborate or simple, the effect was ever the same—all eyes were dazzled, all hearts ravished, so that it was impossible to say which became her best, and “made her more beautiful, admirable, and lovable.” And then he goes on to give us some details concerning Marguerite’s chief triumphs in this direction, which prove that the *Sieur de Brantôme* must have possessed a remarkably observant eye, as well as a tenacious memory: “the gown of shimmering white satin, a trifle of rose-colour mingling in it, with a veil of lace *crêpe* or Roman gauze thrown carelessly round her head, making the goddesses of ancient times and the empresses, as we see them on ancient coins, look like chambermaids beside her”; the gown “of rose-coloured Spanish velvet, covered with spangles and with a cape of the same velvet, with plumes and jewels of such splendour as never was,” in which she appeared at the *Tuileries*, at the fête given by the Queen-mother, in August 1573, to the Polish envoys who had come to offer the crown of Poland to the *Duc d’Anjou*, on which occasion *Brantôme* compared her to *Aurora*, and *Ronsard*, who was with him, “finding the comparison very excellent, made a beautiful sonnet thereon”; the confection of orange and black, “the black relieved by a multitude of spangles,” which she wore at the *Estates of Blois*, in 1576, and, finally, the marvellous “robe of crinkled cloth-of-gold,” which, together with the charms of the wearer, made all the courtiers forget their devotions on Palm Sunday 1572.

And this lovely and elegant princess was no insipid beauty, without a thought in her pretty head beyond the shape of a coiffure or the fit of a gown. She was a clever, even a talented, woman. A true grand-daughter of *François I*, she had inherited the intellectual tastes of the “Father of Letters,” and read widely and with discrimination. As she grew older, her love for books became so intense that, when once she had become interested in any work, nothing could induce her to lay it aside until finished, and “very often she would lose both

her eating and drinking." A complete mistress of her native tongue, as her *Mémoires* and letters prove, and well acquainted with more than one foreign language, she was also a sound classical scholar. When Adam Kanarski, Bishop of Posen, the head of the embassy from Poland, already mentioned, harangued her in Latin, she replied at once eloquently and pertinently, without the aid of an interpreter, to the wonder and admiration of the learned prelate and his colleagues. She would seem, indeed, to have been an admirable speaker, since, on the occasion of a visit to Bordeaux, in 1578, we hear of her making three speeches in succession; one in answer to the bishop of the diocese, the second to that of the governor of the province, and the third in reply to an address presented her by the First President of the Parlement of Bordeaux, "even changing her words to each, without reiterating in the last speech anything which she had said in the first or second, although upon the same subject." So that the President was afterwards heard to declare that, though her two predecessors on the throne of Navarre, Marguerite d'Angoulême and Jeanne d'Albret, had had in their day "the most golden-speaking lips in France," they were "but novices and apprentices compared with her."

Her conversation, "grave and full of majesty and eloquence in high and various discourse," was on ordinary occasions distinguished by a very pretty wit, without, however, Brantôme is careful to tell us, a suspicion of malice, and a wonderful quickness of repartee which made her the life and soul of any company she might happen to be in.

It is indeed lamentable to reflect that a woman possessed of so many natural advantages and so singularly gifted should have been ruined by the vitiated atmosphere amidst which she was brought up, and by that complete absence of moral sense which distinguished the later Valois. But, at the time of her love-affair with the Duc de Guise, Marguerite was still only a girl, and

the unpleasant side of her character was as yet undeveloped.

Marguerite, in her *Mémoires*, emphatically denies that she had any affection for the Duc de Guise, or gave him the smallest encouragement; indeed, so anxious is she to persuade her readers of this that she relates that, a few days before the fatal accident to Henri II, she was sitting on her father's knee, watching the Duc de Guise (then Prince de Joinville), and the little Marquis de Beaupréau, only son of the Prince de la Rochesur-Yon, playing together, when the King laughingly asked her which of the two boys she would like best for a sweetheart. "I replied," she continues, "that I should prefer the marquis." "Why," said he, "he is not so handsome?" (for the Prince de Joinville was light-haired and fair, while the Marquis de Beaupréau had a brown complexion and dark hair). "I replied that it was because he was the better boy, whereas the other was never satisfied unless he were doing harm to somebody every day, and that he always wanted to be master—a true prophecy of what we have since seen fulfilled."

The *Mémoires* of Marguerite de Valois are deserving of all that the greatest critic of modern times has said in their praise<sup>1</sup>; they are models of finesse, of skill, and of diction; but they are the work of a daughter of Catherine de' Medici, and it would perhaps be too much to expect to find candour there as well. They are, indeed, in great part an apology for the life of the writer, who poses throughout as an injured woman, displays an infinite art in explaining away the scandals imputed to her, and in guarding against any statement calculated to injure her with those whom she desires to conciliate. Such being her object, it is not surprising that she should refuse to betray any predilection for the Duc de Guise, and should be careful to conceal the

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve.

nature of the relations between them, since the *Mémoires* were written while she was a prisoner at the Château of Usson, and the Guises had been the most bitter enemies of her husband Henri IV and his advisers, in whose good graces she was, above all things, anxious to reinstate herself. But the student of sixteenth-century history will peruse her protestations with a smile of incredulity, for the love of Marguerite de Valois for Henri de Lorraine, and even a project of marriage between them, so far from being inventions, "fabricated on purpose to destroy her," are notorious facts, established, not only by the testimony of the pamphleteers, but by writers the most worthy of belief and the least suspected of partiality: Président de Thou, Mathieu, Davila, and Mézeray, and also by the diplomatic correspondence of the times.

The Duc d'Anjou watched the growing intimacy between his sister and his rival with a jaundiced eye. His pride as a prince was wounded by the idea that a subject should presume to aspire to the hand of a Daughter of France; and he naturally had no desire to see the importance of the only man who was able to dispute with him the title of General of the Catholics increased by such a marriage. He was animated, too, by other motives. For his beautiful sister he nourished an affection morbid and bizarre, like the majority of his sentiments, an affection which showed itself in jealous rages, and which was to terminate, like a love deceived, in a violent hatred.

However, he dissembled his indignation, in order that the lovers might be the more fully compromised before he intervened; and when Marguerite was slowly recovering from an attack of fever at Angers in the winter of 1569-1570, so far from throwing any obstacle in the way of her intimacy with Guise, used to bring him to his sister's apartments almost every day, "and would often exclaim, embracing him: 'Would to God you were my brother!'"



It is very improbable that Guise allowed himself to be deceived by this perfidious show of friendship, for he could hardly fail to be aware of the profound aversion which Anjou entertained for him. But Marguerite smiled on the handsome young duke, and, if the latter had his suspicions as to Anjou's motives, he was careful not to permit them to be seen, and, in the meantime, gladly availed himself of every opportunity of paying his court to the princess.

That Marguerite was completely fascinated by her brilliant admirer admits, as we have already said, of no possible doubt, notwithstanding her protestations to the contrary. "She had lodged all the affections of her heart in this prince, who possessed such attractive qualities," writes Dupleix. That Guise loved her is not so certain; but, since it had ever been the practice of his family to subordinate their affections to their interests, we may be sure that he played the lover well enough to satisfy the most exacting maiden.

Several historians have hinted that Marguerite had been the duke's mistress<sup>1</sup>; but, though there is no doubt that, at a later period, she lived a very dissolute life, nothing authorises such a supposition. The laws of etiquette, as one of her biographers very justly remarks, were far too severe to render it possible for a Daughter of France, especially one watched by a prudent and suspicious mother, to commit such a fault<sup>2</sup>; while it is in the last degree improbable that Henri de Lorraine, who aspired to the princess's hand, would have entertained the thought of dishonouring her.

The young duke's pretensions found a warm supporter in his uncle, the Cardinal de Lorraine; indeed, it is

<sup>1</sup> "*Elle (Marguerite) avait eu avec lui (Guise) des privautés plus grands qu'il ne fallait*" Davila (French translation). The same historian declares that "their intimacy was so public that there was even a report that they had contracted a secret marriage"; but, if this had been the case, we should certainly have heard something about it at the time of Marguerite's divorce from Henri IV.

<sup>2</sup> Imbert de Saint-Amand, *Les Femmes de la cour des derniers Valois*.

not improbable that that scheming prelate had himself suggested the idea of such a marriage to his nephew. Nor were these pretensions nearly so exorbitant as may at first sight appear. In the time of Claude and François de Lorraine, the Guises had claimed to be treated as foreign princes, and had, on more than one occasion, actually usurped the privileges of the Princes of the Blood; and, though the present head of the family had not as yet ventured to dispute the *pas* with the Bourbons, he took precedence of all the nobility, by virtue of his descent from Louis XII, through Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, whose daughter, Anne d'Este, had married the late Duc de Guise. Moreover, though the Daughters of France were destined to be the consorts of kings and foreign princes, vassals of the Crown had occasionally been honoured with their hands. Thus, the Comte de Foix had married Madeleine de France, daughter of Charles VII; while, to cite a more recent instance, Marguerite's elder sister, Claude, had married Charles II, Duke of Lorraine, head of the elder branch of the family.

However that may be, the prospect of such an alliance was very far from calculated to commend itself to the Valois. Quite apart from the fact that the duke's marriage with Marguerite would have destroyed the equilibrium between the great nobles of the realm which was Catherine de' Medici's great object to maintain and have restored to the ambitious Lorraine princes a great part of the influence which they had wielded with such disastrous results in the previous reign, negotiations had been for some time past in progress for the marriage of the princess to Dom Sebastian, the young King of Portugal. It is therefore not a little singular that so shrewd a politician as the Cardinal de Lorraine should have encouraged his nephew in a course which had so small a prospect of success, and could hardly fail to provoke the greatest resentment in the Royal Family.

During the spring of 1570, Marguerite and the Duc

de Guise met constantly, and by May the intimacy had gone so far that it had become the chief topic of conversation at the Court; and the Spanish Ambassador wrote to Philip II that "there was nothing talked of publicly in France but the marriage of Madame Marguerite with the Duc de Guise"; while the Cardinal de Lorraine told the Legate that "the principal persons concerned were already agreed," and boasted openly that the elder branch of his family had married the elder sister, and that the head of the younger should have the younger.

These injudicious words were repeated to the Queen-mother, who went to visit the cardinal, who was ill in bed, and angrily demanded an explanation. The prelate, perceiving in which quarter the wind sat, protested that he had been misrepresented, but without convincing Catherine, who departed in a very ill humour. However, Guise, encouraged secretly by Marguerite, declined to abandon the field, and, thanks to the complaisance of the Comtesse de Mirandole, one of the Queen-mother's ladies of honour, carried on a correspondence with the princess. Marguerite added some very affectionate lines in her own handwriting to the letters which the duke received from Madame de Mirandole, and the duke replied not less tenderly. About the middle of June 1570, one of these epistles was intercepted by Anjou's favourite, Du Guast, who carried it in triumph to his master, who, in turn, laid it before the Queen-mother and Charles IX. Catherine immediately sent for her daughter, reproached her bitterly with her conduct, and ordered her to break off all intercourse with the duke, who, together with his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, was forbidden to approach her; while the Cardinals de Lorraine and de Guise received a peremptory order to give public denial to the rumours of a betrothal between their nephew and the princess.

As for Charles IX, already irritated by the importance which Guise had assumed since the siege of Poitiers, his

resentment, on learning the news, was so artfully inflamed by the insinuations of Anjou that he ended by falling into one of those violent fits of excitement hardly distinguishable from actual insanity to which he was subject. Vowing that nothing but Guise's blood could atone for his intolerable presumption, he sent for his half-brother, Henri d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France,<sup>1</sup> and, when he appeared, pointed to two swords and exclaimed: "You see those two swords; one is to kill you, if, to-morrow, when I go to the chase, you do not kill the Duc de Guise!"

The Grand Prior, though he had little stomach for the business, being well aware that the duke's death would be followed very speedily by his own, if not at the hands of some of the murdered nobleman's friends, then at those of the Paris mob, dared not refuse the commission; and it was arranged that on the morrow he and some trusty retainers should surround Guise on his return from the chase, and, under the pretext of some dispute, poniard him.

But, when the morrow came, M. d'Angoulême's courage would appear to have failed him, or possibly his intended victim gave him no opportunity of putting his amiable design into execution. Any way, the King learned, on his return to the Louvre, that Guise had reached Paris safe and sound.

Furious at the failure of the plot, Charles sent for his half-brother, bitterly reproached him with his cowardice, and repeated his orders, accompanied by terrible threats. Angoulême promised obedience, and laid more than one ambush for the duke; but the latter, warned secretly by d'Entragues, one of the King's confidants, according to Mongez, by Marguerite herself, according to another version, kept to his hôtel, and all the Grand Prior's schemes came to nothing.

Meantime, Marguerite, who knew her family too well to hope that they would ever sacrifice their political

<sup>1</sup> The son of Henri II and Lady Fleming: see p. 118 *supra*.

calculations for the sake of her happiness, and was, besides, greatly alarmed for the safety of the man she loved, had bethought her of a means of putting an end to this critical situation. Accordingly, she wrote to her sister Claude, who, by her marriage with Duke Charles II of Lorraine, had become a relative of the Guises, begging her to use her influence with the duke to persuade him to appease the King's anger, by renouncing forthwith all pretensions to her hand, and, as a pledge of his good faith, to place a barrier between them by contracting a marriage with his old love, Catherine de Clèves, Princesse de Porcien.

Recognising, from the tone of her sister's letter, that there was not a moment to be lost, the Duchess of Lorraine at once set out for Paris, where she sought out Guise's mother, the Duchesse de Nemours, and communicated to her the contents of the princess's letter. Madame de Nemours was not slow to perceive the danger of the situation in which her son's imprudence had placed him, and that the course suggested by Marguerite was the only one now open to him; and she joined Madame Claude in urging it upon the duke in the strongest possible terms.

An incident which had just occurred lent additional force to their arguments.

One night, there was a ball at the Louvre, at which Guise, in virtue of his office of Grand Master, felt obliged to appear. It was the first time he had been seen in public since the hunting-party which had been chosen for his assassination. Near the entrance to the ball-room he encountered the King, who laid his hand on his sword, and, in an angry tone, inquired what he was doing there. Guise replied that he had come to serve his Majesty. "I have no need of your services," replied the King, livid with passion. The duke made a profound obeisance and retired. His disgrace could not have been indicated in a more significant manner, and, convinced that banishment from the Court and the loss of



his offices, if not a worse fate, awaited him, unless he bowed to the storm, he yielded to the entreaties of his mother and the counsels of the Duchess of Lorraine, and the very next morning his approaching marriage to the Princesse de Porcien was announced. The princess had been aroused in the middle of the night by an urgent summons to the Hôtel de Nemours, where, the moment she arrived, the Duc de Guise had demanded her hand.

The duke's submission, as had been anticipated, had the effect of appeasing the wrath of the King. Guise was permitted to resume his official duties at Court, and when his marriage to the Princesse de Porcien took place shortly afterwards (October 1570), Charles presented the happy pair with a dowry of 100,000 livres. Anjou, however, whose hatred of the duke grew every day more bitter, and who now no longer troubled to dissemble it, was not so easily appeased, and remarked one day to some of his favourites that, "in case the Duc de Guise should cast his eyes on her [Marguerite], he would proclaim him a renegade and a miscreant, if he did not poniard him to the heart and make him bite the ground." In fact, the credit of the Guises was temporarily ruined, and the Cardinal de Lorraine judged it advisable to quit the Court.

Thus ended the first romance of Marguerite de Valois's life. How different would have been the course of that life had she been permitted to yield to her inclinations, and to marry the man whom she seems to have loved with a passion equal to that which she so often inspired! How different, too, in all probability, would have been the course of French history! Certain it is that to the treacherous part played in this affair by the future Henri III may be traced the bitter hatred with which Guise henceforth regarded him, and most of the disasters of the succeeding reign.



## CHAPTER XXIII

Failure of the Peace of Saint-Germain to appease religious animosities—  
A war with Spain the one means of uniting the divided nation—  
Catherine de' Medici and Charles IX—Affairs of Tuscany—Mission  
of Fregoso to France—Catherine's matrimonial schemes—Louis of  
Nassau endeavours to persuade the King and Queen-mother to espouse  
the cause of the revolted Netherlands—Coligny comes to Court—  
His flattering reception by Charles IX, over whom he soon begins  
to acquire great influence—Negotiations for the marriage of Henri  
of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois—Reluctance of the Queen of  
Navarre to allow the nuptials to be celebrated in Paris—Arrival of  
Jeanne d'Albret in Paris—Her illness and death—Sinister rumours  
—Result of the autopsy—Grief of Henri of Navarre—His entry into  
Paris—The Parisians exasperated by the imprudence of the Huguenots  
who accompany him—Growing influence of Coligny over Charles IX  
—The Admiral urges the King to assist the revolted Netherlands—  
Jealousy and alarm of Catherine de' Medici—Marriage of the Prince  
de Condé and Henriette de Clèves—Marriage of Henri of Navarre  
and Marguerite de Valois—The Duc de Guise and the bride—Fes-  
tivities at the Louvre—Allegorical representation at the Hôtel du  
Petit-Bourbon.

FOR the third time, after three civil wars, France essayed peace. But peace was very far from the minds of the great mass of the nation. Even when the leaders of the rival parties were sincere in their desire to observe it, the prejudices that had been awakened, the hatreds that had been amassed, the facility with which private vengeance might be satisfied, caused hostilities to be continued, despite all the edicts of pacification. The Protestant ministers remained malignant; they did not see any other *rôle* for an evangelical pastor than that of popular tribune or martyr. The Catholic preachers believed that they were assuring the salvation of their faithful by urging them to exterminate the heretics. On March 4, 1571, six months after the Peace, the populace of Rouen, stirred up by the monks, massacred

fifteen Huguenots. Each of the two parties wished to suppress the other.

A means, however, offered itself of maintaining the peace, by a national movement which would blend in one common passion all the discordant elements in the nation. A war with Spain might yet save France; those military chiefs now so divided would be found suddenly united in the face of the national enemy; the old captains would become comrades again, as in the days of Metz, Saint-Quentin, and Thionville. The King who would have the courage resolutely to protect the persecuted population of the Netherlands against the monstrous tyranny of Philip II would become the arbiter of Europe. It was no longer a question, as in the days of François I, of a conquest vigorously disputed and of undertaking long and difficult sieges. The Flemish towns looked to France as their liberators; their inhabitants had no longer any hope of escaping the massacres and the ruin, the horror of which is remembered to this day, save in the intervention of Charles IX.

Hitherto Charles IX had been King in name only. From the first, Catherine intended him to be entirely under her influence; she had no such affection for him as she entertained for the unworthy Anjou, but, so long as he occupied the throne, she was resolved to maintain her dominion over him, and she succeeded so well that even when Charles had been a year or two King, it was observed that he dared not say yes or no without her leave.

Charles IX had been a child of the greatest promise. "You would not believe," said the Duchess of Ferrara to the English Ambassador, shortly after he had ascended the throne, "what rare qualities he shows, even at this early age." And the Venetian Ambassador wrote to his Government: "The King shows in all his actions much nobility of mind; his speech is gentle, his expression bright and pleasing; much is to be hoped for, if he lives, provided he is not spoilt and his instincts ruined

by the negligence and malice of others. . . . I say, if he lives and if he is not spoilt, for it is to be feared that one or other will be his portion."

Unhappily, none of Catherine's sons were healthy either in mind or body, and though Charles, contrary to many expectations, lived to be a man, the vigilant solicitude with which his mother surrounded him, from dread of his falling under any influence which might run counter to her own, tended to encourage some of the worst traits in his character. He grew up, in fact, moody and violent, coarse in speech, and liable to fits of almost insane fury, which Catherine could always provoke, but could not always control. He was passionately fond of horses and the chase; indeed, the immoderate ardour with which he pursued this pastime undoubtedly contributed to shorten his days; but no form of violent exercise seems to have come amiss to him, and at the Louvre he frequently put on a smith's apron and worked at the anvil for hours. With all this, he had a marked taste for poetry and music, which was the only softening influence he knew.

The young King had followed Catherine docilely enough through all her religious tergiversations, now regarded as a Huguenot in all but the name, now fiercely hostile to Reform. But of late he had begun to show signs of restiveness. He had been much displeased at the undisguised preference she showed for his brother Anjou, of whose military successes he was intensely jealous, and was resolved to take the first opportunity of emancipating himself from the maternal control and showing that he was the real, as well as the nominal, ruler of France, and one with whom the other princes of Europe would have to reckon.

The affairs of Italy furnished him with the occasion. On August 27, 1569, Pope Pius V had nominated Cosimo de' Medici, Sovereign of Florence, Grand-Duke of Tuscany, and six months later had crowned him solemnly at the Vatican. Maximilian II, in the name of the Emperor,

and Philip II, as Sovereign of Naples and Milan, had protested; and their representations took so menacing a form that Cosimo despatched to Germany an agent named Fregoso, to endeavour to procure him the support of the Protestant Princes against the House of Austria. Coldly received in Germany, Fregoso passed into France, and proceeded to La Rochelle, where he had several interviews with Louis of Nassau, brother of William of Orange, who had come to La Rochelle to organise the operations of the "beggars of the sea" against the Spaniards. These two drew up a project of alliance between Charles IX and the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, which was communicated to the King by the Admiral's son-in-law, the *Sieur de Téligny*. Charles welcomed with enthusiasm the idea of common action against Spain, and in a secret audience which he gave to the Florentine Ambassador, *Petrucchi*, he begged him to inform his master that he would sustain him against all his enemies. He sought, however, no aggrandizement in Italy, but limited his designs to Flanders.

In his conversation with *Petrucchi*, the King declared that it would be easy to gain his mother's consent to a rupture with Spain; but he carefully concealed his designs from her. Perhaps he hoped to push matters so far that Catherine would be obliged to accept the accomplished fact.

It is certain that Catherine had penetrated this intrigue, but she did nothing to thwart it. She was at this time entirely occupied with negotiations for the marriage of her daughter, *Marguerite*, to *Henri of Navarre*, and of the *Duc d'Anjou*, or, failing him, his younger brother, the *Duc d'Alençon*, to *Elizabeth of England*. By the first marriage, she intended to consolidate the Peace of Saint-Germain, to flatter the Huguenots and allay their suspicions, while, at the same time, weakening their power of offence by bringing their nominal chief directly under her own influence; by the second, to gain the support of England against Spain and the aggrandize-

ment of one of her sons at Philip II's expense, either in the Netherlands or in Italy. Neither negotiation was proceeding well, however, for, at bottom, Elizabeth had no desire to marry, though it behoved her to be reconciled with France, and it did not displease her to add another name to the list of her pretenders. Her coquetry, however, gave an air of candour to her political calculations, and she declared that she was unworthy to espouse so young a prince, in order to cause it to be said that age had not affected her charms. The Navarre match, concerning which active negotiations had been in progress since the beginning of 1571, was also presenting difficulties, Jeanne d'Albret having received the overtures of the Court very coldly. She was intensely ambitious for her idolised son, and desirous of doing everything in her power to promote the interests of her party. But she hated Catherine and all the Valois, and entertained the most profound distrust of their professions of friendship. Since Louis de Nassau was known to possess great influence over the Queen of Navarre, Catherine was anxious to conciliate this enemy of Spain, and he was accordingly invited to the Court.

Towards the middle of July, Louis de Nassau quitted La Rochelle and proceeded to the Château of Lumigny, where he had a first and secret interview with the King and the Queen-mother; some days after he saw them again, at Fontainebleau, with the same mystery. He represented to their Majesties that, if France embraced the cause of the unfortunate people of the Netherlands, the ruin of their oppressors was certain; on the approach of a French army, half the Flemish towns would declare immediately against Alva. He considered, too, that the co-operation of Elizabeth and of the Protestant princes of Germany was not doubtful, provided that France consented to share with England and the Empire the sovereignty of those provinces.

The King replied that, if he could reckon upon such alliances, he would willingly undertake this enterprise.



But the promises that he made in secret to Louis de Nassau appear to have gone a good deal further than the assurances that he gave him before his mother. Nevertheless, it is not improbable that Catherine herself had been for a moment tempted by the alluring prospect which their visitor had spread before them, and that her ambition had temporarily triumphed over her prudence and her fears.

The moment appeared so decisive to Coligny, who, notwithstanding the Peace of Saint-Germain, had continued to hold aloof from the Court, and had declined even to be present at the marriage of Charles IX to the Archduchess Elizabeth of Austria, that he yielded at length to the importunities of the King and Catherine, and on September 15 joined the Court at Blois. He did not come without many misgivings, for he was well aware of the rancorous hatred of which he was the object, and recent and tragic events can hardly have served to lessen his apprehensions. His elder brother, the Cardinal de Châtillon, had died at Southampton in the previous February, at the moment of embarking for France, and his *valet de chambre* was suspected of having poisoned him, though by whose orders no two persons seemed to be agreed; while a few days after the arrival of the Court on the banks of the Loire (September 1, 1571), Lignerolles, one of the favourites of the Duc d'Anjou, had been assassinated in broad daylight by "seven or eight brave and valiant gentlemen."<sup>1</sup>

The King affected at first the most violent indignation; but, though the murderers were arrested, they had little difficulty in obtaining a full pardon. No one appears to have doubted that the crime had been committed by order of the King or Catherine.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brantôme.

<sup>2</sup> Certain Protestant writers, and, after them, Davila, have pretended that Lignerolles had been assassinated to prevent his revealing the great project of the extermination of the Huguenots; but this version will not bear examination. From the correspondence of Catherine with La Mothe-Fénelon, the French Ambassador in England, she suspected Lignerolles of urging the Duc d'Anjou to refuse the hand of Elizabeth.



Coligny's decision to brave the dangers which awaited him at the Court was regarded by his party as most imprudent; but to those who remonstrated with him he replied that he preferred to die and to be dragged through the streets of Paris than to resume the civil war. He was convinced that the only chance of preventing Frenchmen from turning their swords against one another was to draw the country into a foreign war, and he was resolved to employ every means to accomplish this, no matter at what personal risk.

On the announcement that the Admiral was expected at Blois, the Guises and the Duc de Montpensier, who, two years before, had married the Duc de Guise's sister, Catherine de Lorraine, left the Court. Coligny had, however, no cause to complain of the reception accorded him. When he knelt to kiss the King's hand, Charles IX raised him up, shook him by the hand, and called him "his father." "We have you now," said he, laughing, "and we shall not let you escape us." His Majesty's actions gave the most favourable interpretation to his words, in which people might have sought, a year later, to find a sinister significance. He showed a lively interest in all that concerned the Admiral. He gave him a *gratification* of 100,000 livres as a wedding present,<sup>1</sup> and, as compensation for the sack of his Château of Châtillon, which had been pillaged during the last civil war, he accorded him for a year, notwithstanding that he was a Protestant, the revenues of the late Cardinal de Châtillon's benefices; while his son-in-law, Téligny, and the gentlemen of his suite, were overwhelmed with liberalities.

She declared that "he would repent of it." According to the English Ambassador in France, Walsingham, the murdered man was an agent of Spain and of the Guises.

<sup>1</sup> Coligny had lately taken unto himself a second wife in most romantic circumstances. A noble lady of Savoy, the Dame d'Entremonts, had been so impressed by the report of the Admiral's heroic deeds that had reached her, that, although she had never even set eyes upon him, she wished to become, as she expressed it, "the Martia of this new Cato," and, despite the prohibition of the Duke of Savoy, she escaped to France and in March 1571 married Coligny at La Rochelle.

Coligny, however, was far less sensible to these pecuniary favours than to the political favours which accompanied them. The King restored to him his place in the Council, consulted him on everything, and granted him requests which he had refused to Anjou and even to the Queen-mother herself. Suspicious of all about him, terrified by his mother's craft and his brother's ambition, surrounded by Italian fortune-hunters and Spanish spies, the forlorn young King turned with a sudden impulse of confidence to his reconciled adversary, the Huguenot leader, the most disinterested man of his day. In the austere simplicity of Coligny's character, in his steadfastness of purpose, in his haughty indifference to hostile opinions, and, above all, in his supreme contempt for his own personal advantage, the weak, capricious boy found a sense of relief and security.<sup>1</sup> It soon appeared that the Admiral's influence was over-mastering every other; and the adroit courtiers no longer thought of addressing themselves to any other intermediary.

Catherine had received Coligny very graciously. She believed that she was so completely mistress of the young King's mind that she was sure of being able to change his opinions on any subject at any moment, and that she need fear no rival influence. But when she saw the ascendancy he was assuming over her son, her attitude changed, and more than one passage-of-arms took place between them.

It was on the question of foreign policy that they were chiefly in disagreement. Catherine was naturally pacific and cautious. The power of the House of Austria exercised over her a sort of fascination. She regarded Philip II with a mixture of envy, hatred, respect and admiration, and, though she sought to create difficulties in his path, she feared to attack him openly. She therefore counselled Charles IX on no account to permit a rupture with Spain until it could take place with

<sup>1</sup> H. C. Macdowall, "Henry of Guise and other Portraits."

absolute confidence of success, but "to remain at peace and govern his realm, for that was wise and good policy." Early in October 1571, came the news of the naval engagement of Lepanto, in which the fleets of the Pope, Venice, and Spain almost annihilated the Turkish fleet. This victory, by which the empire of the Mediterranean passed for a time at least to the Catholic Powers, seemed to justify Catherine's advice. Philip II dominated on sea and on land; and it was certainly not the moment to brave him. But the Queen-mother had too much need of the Protestant chiefs to dismiss them, for she relied on Louis of Nassau's and Coligny's influence with Jeanne d'Albret to overcome the difficulties the latter was raising to the marriage of her son with Marguerite de Valois.

The objections of the Queen of Navarre were finally overcome by the representations of the Huguenot chiefs and the nobility of her own little kingdom, and in January 1572 she and Catherine met at Tours to settle the preliminaries of the marriage. It is interesting to remark that the most thorny of all the questions connected with the marriage was the question of where it was to take place; indeed, it was not settled until Jeanne had joined the Court at Blois.

From the very beginning of the negotiations, the Queen of Navarre had absolutely refused to consent to the nuptials being celebrated in Paris, whose inhabitants, to use her own expression, were "*peuples mutins, ennemis d'elle et des siens*." Several of the Huguenot leaders were also strongly opposed to the idea of a marriage in the capital; indeed Rosny—the future Duc de Sully—had said to Jeanne d'Albret at Tours: "Believe me, Madame, that if these nuptials are ever celebrated in Paris, the liveries worn will be blood-coloured!" They knew how rancorous was the hostility of the Parisians to the Reformed religion, how bitterly they resented the Peace of Saint-Germain and the growing influence of the Huguenot party, and how complete was the

ascendency of the Guises over the excitable populace. To trust themselves in the midst of a city whose inhabitants regarded them with such feelings seemed to them the height of imprudence, for, with all the good will in the world, the King might be powerless to save them, if once the frenzied fanaticism of the mob were to be aroused. However, the King and Queen-mother had so many reasons to allege in favour of the capital that it was impossible to gainsay them. They pointed out that it was the immemorial custom of the Kings of France to marry the royal princesses in the metropolis of their realm; that it would be impossible to hold the festivities proper to such an occasion in any of the royal residences save the Louvre; that to celebrate the marriage elsewhere would not only cause the greatest disappointment amongst the nobility, but would be deeply resented by the Parisians, who would regard it as a reflection upon their loyalty; finally, that the importance of the alliance, which was intended to proclaim to France and to all Europe that the internal dissensions which had so long distracted the realm were at length appeased, imperatively demanded that it should be solemnised in the capital and with all possible magnificence.

Very reluctantly, Jeanne yielded to their Majesties' desire; but the Huguenot chiefs proposed that, since to Paris they must go, they should proceed thither in such force as to render any attempt against them on the part of the Guises and their partisans worse than useless. This suggestion was strongly opposed by the Queen of Navarre, as being calculated to provoke the very calamity which they feared; but, after her untimely death, her wishes were disregarded—a fatal error, which, as we shall presently see, was to be fraught with the most disastrous consequences.

At the beginning of the last week in May, Jeanne d'Albret arrived in Paris and took up her quarters at the Hôtel de Condé, Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Honoré.

Her ostensible reason in preceding the Court to the capital was to make extensive purchases in view of the approaching marriage—jewels and other costly gifts for her future daughter-in-law, suitable equipment for herself and her suite, and so forth; but, in reality, to ascertain the temper of the citizens towards the House of Bourbon, ere trusting her beloved son to their hospitality, for, as we have mentioned, she entertained the most profound dislike and distrust of the Parisians. On the evening of June 4, on her return from a shopping expedition, the Queen complained of feeling unwell; during the night she became much worse, and on June 9, despite all the efforts of her physicians, she died, at the age of forty-four.

Sinister rumours circulated among the little group of Huguenots round her death-bed, and quickly spread through the city. A visit which the Queen had paid, on the day of her sudden seizure, to the shop of Catherine's Florentine perfumer René ("a man," says L'Estoile, "impregnated with all kinds of wickedness, who lived on murders, thefts, and poisonings") was considered a most suspicious circumstance, and it was freely asserted that she had been poisoned. "It was suspected," writes La Planche, "that the Queen-mother had had recourse to Maître René, her reputed poisoner, who, in selling his perfumes and scented ruffs to the Queen [of Navarre] contrived to administer poison to her, from the effects of which she died shortly afterwards." Such writers as L'Estoile, Olhagaray, de Thou and Mézeray have not feared to add their testimony to the common prejudice; but there can be no question that Jeanne's health had been gradually failing for some time past, and the most trustworthy evidence, such as that of Palma Cayet, Henri IV's tutor, Favyn, the historian of Navarre, and the surgeons, Caillard and Desnoëuds, who assisted the Queen in her last moments, all goes to indicate that she died from natural causes. At the autopsy held, by order of Charles IX, by his first surgeon and Jeanne's



medical attendants, in the presence of certain officers of the deceased Queen's household, all the organs were found to be healthy and free from disease, with the exception of the lungs. "A large abscess was then discovered, which had broken, the secretion being partially absorbed by the lungs, which were besides very extensively diseased."<sup>1</sup>

The deceased Queen had left instructions for her interment in the sepulchre of her family, in the cathedral of Lescar, near Pau; but her wishes were disregarded, and, by the orders of Charles IX, her remains were conveyed to Vendôme and deposited near those of her husband, Antoine de Bourbon.

Henri of Navarre, who had quitted Béarn on his way to Paris in the early days of June, had arrived at Chaunay, in Poitou, when the news of his mother's death reached him. Already in somewhat indifferent health, the blow, which was totally unexpected, completely prostrated him and brought on a violent attack of fever, so that Jeanne had already been laid to rest when he arrived at Vendôme. Here he remained for several days, and appears to have had some thought of demanding that the marriage should be indefinitely postponed and returning to Béarn. But Coligny, who fondly imagined that the match was to be the dawn of a new era, wrote letter after letter to induce him to continue his journey, and eventually he yielded to the Admiral's representations, and on July 20 made his solemn entry into Paris, accompanied by his cousin, the Prince de Condé, whose marriage to Marie de Clèves, sister of the Duchesse de Guise, was to precede his own, and 800 Huguenot gentlemen, all wearing long mourning mantles of black cloth.

In the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the young King was received by the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon, the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Ducs de Guise and de Mont-

<sup>1</sup> Palma Cayet, *Chronologie novennaire*.



pensier, the Maréchaux de Montmorency, de Cossé, Damville, and de Tavannes, and about 400 gentlemen of the Court. The usual compliments having been exchanged—hollow enough in most instances, we fear—the two parties joined forces and proceeded to the Louvre, through streets densely thronged with people, who acclaimed Guise and the other Catholic leaders, and respectfully saluted the King of Navarre, but cast angry and threatening glances at the formidable body of Huguenot nobles and gentlemen who brought up the rear of the procession.

For all that was bravest and most distinguished in Protestant France rode there: the gallant La Rochefoucauld; the grave and chivalrous Téligny; Montgomery, the involuntary slayer of Henri II, who had escaped, almost by a miracle, from the massacre at Rouen in 1563; the Vidame de Chartres, the negotiator of the Treaty of Hampton Court; Piles, the heroic defender of Saint-Jean-d'Angély; Montclar, Soubise, Renel, Duras, Grammont, the two Pardaillans, Caumont, Guerchy, and many others, few of whom were fated ever to see their homes again.

Henri of Navarre was at this time nineteen years old; a slight, wiry youth, with piercing eyes, a long nose, and a pointed chin, who had been "brought up without delicacy and with no superfluities" and trained from early childhood to live on the simplest fare, to endure the heat of summer and the frosts of winter, and to despise fatigue and danger. He was a most agreeable companion, and appeared to have taken for his model his uncle, the first Prince de Condé, whom he resembled, not only in the quickness of his repartees and his irrepressible gaiety, but in his addiction to feminine society. As yet, however, he had shown no indication of possessing those high qualities which were to make him so successful a party leader and so great a king.

While the preparations for the marriage were being made with all that elegance and luxury with which the



HENRI DE BOURBON, KING OF NAVARRE (AFTERWARDS HENRI IV)

Valois knew so well how to invest their festivities, and the young King of Navarre was engaged in paying his addresses to the reluctant princess destined to become his wife, the Court was a hot-bed of intrigue and the city seething with suppressed excitement. It is unfortunately seldom the practice of minorities which, after prolonged and painful struggles, find power at length in their grasp, to conduct themselves with tact and moderation, and of this rule the behaviour of the Huguenots affords a striking illustration. Ignoring the fact that they were indebted to the favourable position they now occupied far less to their own courage and devotion—though, indeed, they had been courageous and devoted enough—than to the exigencies of the Queen-mother's tortuous policy, they were at no pains to avoid shocking the susceptibilities of the Parisians. Their truculent attitude as they passed fully armed through the streets, the boastful tone of their conversation, and, still more, their ostentatious disregard of Catholic observances, combined to render them intensely obnoxious to the citizens, taught to regard these half-foreigners of the South with horror and loathing, as despoilers of churches, contemners of the Mass, and slayers of priests. Moreover, their numbers aroused the greatest apprehension among the more timorous, who asked themselves, and with some apparent reason, why, on the occasion of an event which was supposed to be the pledge and proof of peace and amity between the rival religions, the King of Navarre should have chosen to enter Paris at the head of this formidable array, and feared lest they should be "robbed and despoiled in their houses."

And, just as the conduct of the rank and file of the Huguenots exasperated the populace of Paris, so did the pretensions of Coligny cause alarm and resentment at the Court.

We have said that the Admiral had, from the time of his visit to the King at Blois, in the previous September, acquired a great influence over Charles IX, and this

influence had steadily increased until it threatened to eclipse completely that of the Queen-mother. The King was so entirely dominated by the Huguenot leader that he devoted to him entire days; in his cabinet at the Louvre, the Admiral remained with him until a late hour at night, and, in his Majesty's absence, he presided at the Council; at his request, the Croix de Gastines, at Paris, which was specially offensive to the Huguenots, as commemorating the destruction of a house and the execution of two of their number, was removed; many of the Protestant grievances were listened to and satisfaction promised; for the moment, he seemed master of the situation.

It was the one healthy influence that had come into Charles's life; the Admiral bade him remember that he was King of France, and encouraged in him the desire to be a great king—a warrior like Charles VIII, like Louis XII, like François I, his grandfather. And ever, in season and out of season, he urged him to take part openly in the struggle of the revolted Netherlands against Spain.

Coligny's object was a threefold one. In the first place, he knew that, sooner or later, a conflict with Spain was inevitable, unless France were prepared to sink into a subordinate position in Western Europe. It was surely better that that conflict should come while Philip had his hands full than at the time of Spain's own choosing. In the second, he naturally desired to assist his co-religionists in the Low Countries to shake off the intolerable yoke under which they had so long groaned. But, most of all, he desired war because, as we have explained elsewhere, he perceived that a foreign war, which would unite all parties in one common cause, was the surest, nay, the only guarantee of internal peace.

Catherine's position was indeed an embarrassing one. Distrusted by the extreme Catholics for her concessions to the Huguenots, denounced as a second Jezebel by

the bigoted Calvinists, and intensely unpopular with the people, as a foreigner and for favouring the Italian adventurers who infested the Court, she now found herself threatened with the loss of her son's confidence, and of that power which was the great object of her life. "The Admiral was taking away from her her little one, whom she had so well accustomed to obey her and to do nothing save according to her will. A declaration of war was to be risked without her sanction or approval. She, who by so many sacrifices, so many labours, such sagacity and penetration, had monopolised the authority and guided the realm for nearly eleven years! A war by Coligny's orders, a war against Spain, the King at the head of the troops, with the flower of France around him, and the Admiral, instigator of everything, active and ubiquitous! What would she be then? A woman in the State, but no longer the Regent, no longer the great Queen-mother, so much dreaded and obeyed! She saw the danger; and the Louvre saw it soon. We are on the eve of her sanguinary work."<sup>1</sup>

The marriage of the Prince de Condé with Marie de Clèves preceded by some days that of his cousin. It took place, with great rejoicings, on August 10, at the Château of Blandy, near Melun, in the presence of Charles IX, the King of Navarre, his fiancée, the two Queens, and a large number of noblemen of both religions; and was celebrated *tout-à-fait à la Huguenote*, a fact which still further exasperated the fanatical Catholics of Paris.

The royal wedding had been fixed for Monday, August 18. On the 17th, the marriage contract was signed at the Louvre, and the King of Navarre and Madame Marguerite formally betrothed by the Cardinal de Bourbon. After a magnificent supper, followed by a ball, the princess was conducted, in great pomp, by the whole of the Royal Family, to the palace of the

<sup>1</sup> Armand Baschet, *la Diplomatie vénitienne*.

Archbishop of Paris, where she passed the night, such being the traditional custom on the occasion of the marriage of a Daughter of France.

The following day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a brilliant cortège, comprising the King of Navarre, the Ducs d'Anjou and d'Alençon, the Princes of the Blood, the Marshals of France, Coligny, Guise, and a distinguished body of nobles, both Catholic and Protestant, quitted the Louvre and proceeded to the archbishop's palace. Thence presently emerged the bride, conducted by the King, "whose cap, poniard, and raiment," writes Giovanni Michieli, the Venetian Ambassador, "represented from five to six hundred thousand écus,"<sup>1</sup> and followed by the Queen, the Queen-mother, the Duchess of Lorraine, and more than 120 ladies of the Court, "brilliant in the most splendid stuffs, such as brocade, cloth-of-gold, and velvet brocaded in gold and laced with silver, and covered with diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones." Marguerite de Valois was attired in a robe of violet velvet spangled with *fleurs-de-lys*, "with the crown and the *couët* of speckled ermine, which was worn on the front of the body, all glittering with the Crown jewels, and the large blue mantle, with a train four *elles* long, which was borne by three princesses."<sup>2</sup> Thus dressed *à la royale*, according to her own expression, "flashing with diamonds and jewels, but more seducing still by the power of her own charms, she advanced adorned for the sacrifice."

A magnificent amphitheatre, covered with cloth-of-gold, with side-galleries, one of which, passing through the nave, led to the choir, and the other to the episcopal palace, had been erected before the porch of Notre-Dame. Along the latter the Court made its way, while an enormous concourse of people thronged the windows and roofs of the adjoining houses, and surged

<sup>1</sup> *Relazione della corte la Francia*, cited by Armand Baschet, *la Diplomatie vénitienne*.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois* (edit. Guessard).



and jostled one another below the platform, in order to catch a glimpse of the procession. That the marriage was intensely unpopular among the Parisians was evident from the behaviour of the spectators. There was an almost complete absence of the enthusiasm usually manifested on such occasions; curiosity alone seemed to have brought them together, and the King and the other members of the Royal Family were suffered to pass by with hardly an acclamation. At the far end of the amphitheatre, by the door of the cathedral, the Cardinal de Bourbon was awaiting the youthful pair, and the marriage was performed according to the formula previously agreed upon by the two parties. Davila relates that, when the cardinal asked Marguerite, whose deadly pallor and dejected air appeared to many to augur but ill for the happiness of the marriage, whether she accepted the King of Navarre for her husband, she refused to reply, whereupon Charles IX gave her a little push at the back of her head, "to make her give that sign of consent, in lieu of speech."<sup>1</sup>

When the Court returned to the Louvre, the people were more demonstrative than they had been earlier in the day. But the applause was not for the bridal pair, nor for the King of France; it was for the idol of the Parisian populace, the Duc de Guise, who bowed and smiled repeatedly in response to the acclamations of the mob.

The festivities which followed were magnificent. On the evening of the wedding-day, there was a ball in the great hall of the Louvre, which was attended by all the rank and beauty of France, and was succeeded by a ballet, a form of entertainment which in those days had all the charm of novelty. On the morrow, August 19, the Court proceeded to the Hôtel d'Anjou, where

<sup>1</sup> According to Mézeray, it was the Cardinal de Bourbon who made the princess bow her head. "It was at this moment," adds Mongez, "that the Duc de Guise, who had raised himself above the other nobles to watch the face and eyes of Marguerite, received such a threatening glance from Charles IX that he well-nigh lost consciousness."

the King of Navarre had caused a magnificent banquet to be prepared, at the conclusion of which it returned to the Louvre, for a second ball, which lasted until a late hour. On the Wednesday, there was an allegorical entertainment, devised by the Duc d'Anjou, at the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, which, in view of the tragic event which was to follow so speedily, has a curious significance.

"In the hall of the palace, a paradise or heaven had been constructed, the entrance to which was defended by the King and his two brothers, fully armed. On the other side, was hell, in which there were many devils and little imps making a racket and playing monkey-tricks, and a great-wheel, surrounded by little wheels, revolving in the said hell. A river traversed by Charon's bark separated hell from Paradise. Beyond the latter were the Elysian Fields, represented by a garden adorned by foliage and all kinds of flowers, surmounted by the empyrean heaven—that is to say, a wheel bearing the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the seven planets, and an infinitude of little crystal stars. The wheel was in continual motion and caused also the revolution of the paradise, in which there were twelve nymphs simply attired. Several knight-errants, led by the King of Navarre, presented themselves and endeavoured to fight their way into Paradise, and carry off the nymphs. But the three knights who guarded its entrance repulsed them. The latter, having broken their lances and fought for some time with their swords, precipitated them into Tartarus, where they were dragged away by the devils and furies. The combat lasted until the attacking knights had been led away and imprisoned in hell. Then Mercury and Cupid descended from heaven and made the air resound with their songs. Having reached the earth, they approached the guardians of Paradise, felicitated them on their victory, and ascended once more to heaven. The knights went to seek the nymphs and performed with them, around a

fountain which occupied the middle of the hall, a variety of dances, which lasted more than an hour. After this, they yielded to the prayers of the assembly, and delivered the imprisoned knights, fought pell-mell with them, and broke their lances. The whole hall was filled with the sparks and flames which spurted forth from the shock of their weapons. But soon a great explosion was heard, which, in a short while, consumed all the scenery and brought this Gothic spectacle to a close."<sup>1</sup>

The festivities terminated on Thursday, August 21, by a great tournament in front of the Louvre. On one side, appeared Charles IX and his two brothers, and the Ducs de Guise and d'Aumale, disguised as Amazons; on the other, the King of Navarre and several nobles of his suite, dressed in Turkish costume, in robes of rich brocade, with turbans on their heads. The three Queens and the Court watched the combat from balconies erected on either side of the lists.

<sup>1</sup> Mongez, *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois*.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Suspicion and uneasiness of the Huguenots—Coligny is strongly advised to leave Paris, but is deaf to all appeals—Catherine, tortured by hatred and jealousy of the Admiral, resolves to remove him from her path—Her coadjutors and object—Attempted assassination of Coligny—Indignation of Charles IX—Visit of the King and Queen-mother to the wounded Admiral—Exasperation of the Huguenots—Their rash and threatening demonstrations—Catherine, fearful of her guilt being brought home to her, determines on a massacre of the Protestant chiefs—And, after great difficulty, succeeds in obtaining the King's consent—She sends for the Duc de Guise and entrusts him with the preparations—St. Bartholomew's Eve at the Louvre—St. Bartholomew's Day—Guise and the murder of Coligny—His pursuit of Montgomery—The massacre at the Louvre—Charles IX and Henri of Navarre—The massacre in the city—Manœuvres of the Queen-mother—Guise, on his return from the pursuit of Montgomery, endeavours to save the Protestants—The massacre in the provinces—Probable number of the victims.

THE part allotted to the King of Navarre and his friends in the mythological allegory at the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon had caused much unfavourable comment among the Huguenots; some regarded it as an insult; others—it was a superstitious age—as an evil omen. The Calvinists, moreover, felt ill at ease in the midst of a city so fiercely hostile to them, and which, even on the occasion of the recent marriage, had scarcely troubled to disguise its animosity; while the more clear-sighted of them feared the resentment of Catherine, who had the mortification of seeing her once undisputed influence over her feeble son altogether overshadowed by that of Coligny, who was becoming each day more firmly established in the King's favour and more completely master of his mind. Suspicion and distrust were everywhere. The Maréchal de Montmorency, who, though a Catholic, was so closely in sympathy with his kinsman Coligny

as to be generally regarded as his ally, pleaded illness and retired to Chantilly. Not a few of the more prudent Huguenots followed his example. One of these, Montferrand by name, who was commonly accounted half-witted, took leave of the Admiral with the following words: "I am going because of the good cheer they are giving you. I prefer to be classed with madmen than with fools; you can cure the one, but not the other."<sup>1</sup>

Coligny, indeed, received repeated warnings and was strongly urged to leave Paris; but, though he could hardly fail to be aware of the danger of his position, he was deaf to all appeals. To quit the field at such a moment was to lose it, and he had far too much at stake. Although, on August 9, the Council had pronounced uncompromisingly against a breach with Spain, and the King had sided with it, the Admiral had not ceased his preparations for assisting the revolted Netherlands. Three thousand Huguenots were already on the frontier; 12,000 foot and 3,000 horse were being raised. Should this formidable force once enter Spanish territory, it would be hard indeed for Charles to disavow the action of his subjects, and a declaration of war on the part of Spain would almost certainly follow.

And Catherine knew this—knew, too, that war would render Coligny indispensable, both as statesman and soldier, and reduce her own waning influence to vanishing point. Tortured by hatred and jealousy of this redoubtable rival, with whom she was determined never to share the Government, she decided to take the only sure means of removing him from her path. And that means was assassination, a practice which had become terribly rife in France since the beginning of the civil wars and the spread of Italian manners, and no longer excited the reprobation it had evoked in less troublous times. "People kept assassins in their pay as they kept servants; the Guises had them, the Châtillons had them, the kings had them; all those who could afford

<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigné, *Histoire universelle*.

the expense had them, and these assassins were seldom or never punished."<sup>1</sup>

Who her coadjutors were is somewhat doubtful, while the identity of the person chosen for the dastardly deed is also a matter of dispute. The Venetian Ambassador, Michieli, declares that the affair was concerted by the Queen-mother and Anjou alone; but almost all authorities, both contemporary and modern, are convinced that the Guises were parties to the crime, though there is some difference of opinion as to whether the Duchesse de Nemours, the widow of François de Lorraine, was implicated. As for the assassin, his name is variously given as Bême, a Bohemian in the service of the Guises; Tosinghi, a Florentine soldier of fortune, and one Louvier, Seigneur de Maurevert. Bême, whom we shall hear of again presently, is indicated by the Florentine Ambassador, Petrucci, and Tosinghi by Michieli; but the weight of evidence points undoubtedly to Maurevert.<sup>2</sup>

What did Catherine hope would be the immediate result of the Admiral's death, besides the removal of the rival influence to her own? Undoubtedly, she antici-

<sup>1</sup> The foreign Ambassadors kept them also, for the purpose of making away with political refugees from their own countries who had taken refuge in France.

<sup>2</sup> Maurevert was a gentleman of experience in his abominable *métier*. He began life as one of the pages of the Duke of Lorraine; but, having assassinated the *gouverneur* of the pages, he was obliged to fly to Spain. In 1569, he obtained letters of pardon for this first crime, and during the third War of Religion offered to assassinate Coligny. The Court accepted his services and he proceeded to the Huguenot camp, just as Poltrot de Méré had joined that of the Catholics, six years earlier. But opportunity, or, more probably, courage failed him, and, the money with which his employers had supplied him being exhausted, he fell into want, from which he was rescued by the gallant Sieur de Mouhy, one of the Huguenot chiefs. To show his gratitude, Maurevert murdered his benefactor by shooting him one day through the head, from behind, with a pistol, after which foul deed he made his escape on a horse which Mouhy had given him. Catherine related this adventure to Tavannes, who replied, "He deserves to be hanged." But the Queen-mother was of a different opinion, and made Charles IX write a letter to the Duc d'Anjou to recommend Maurevert "as being he who killed Mouhy in the way which he will tell you." And the letter, which was discovered, printed, and distributed by the National Convention in 1794, continues: "I ask you, my brother, to give him, on my behalf, the collar of my Order [of Saint-Michel]."



pated a rising of all the Huguenots then in Paris, and a sanguinary fracas between them and the Guise faction; for Guise, whose undying hatred of Coligny was common knowledge,<sup>1</sup> would certainly be suspected of the crime. Whatever the outcome of such an encounter might be, it could not fail to strengthen materially the hands of her own party; for both parties would emerge from it with severe losses. If, at one and the same time, she could rid herself of both Coligny and Guise, to say nothing of a few of the lesser lights of either party, the step she contemplated would indeed be a master-stroke of diplomacy! In any case, Catherine's attempt upon the Admiral's life proves conclusively, in the opinion of all impartial historians, that the terrible tragedy of St. Bartholomew's Day was in no sense premeditated, but was the result of a sudden resolution, forced upon her by the failure of the lesser crime. "Why kill the chief before the general massacre?" asks Mérimée, very pertinently. "Would not such a step be calculated to alarm the Huguenots and put them on their guard?"

On Friday, August 22, between ten and eleven in the morning, Coligny, after attending the Council at the Louvre, was passing on foot through the Rue des Poulins, on his way to his lodging,<sup>2</sup> accompanied by about half a dozen Huguenot gentlemen, when an arquebus was fired from one of the ground-floor windows of a house in the cloisters of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. The Admiral was walking slowly at the time, reading a petition which had just been presented to him. One ball broke the forefinger of his right hand, while the same missile or another entered at the wrist of his left arm and passed out at the elbow. The assassin, who,

<sup>1</sup> Guise and Coligny had met each day during the marriage fêtes; but, as several of the foreign Ambassadors reported to their Courts, they did not exchange so much as a word.

<sup>2</sup> It still appears to be the belief of most writers that the house occupied by Coligny was in the Rue de Béthisy, next the corner formed by that street and the Rue de l'Arbre Sac. But M. Fournier, in his *Paris démolie* maintains that it was in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, of which the Rue de Béthisy was a continuation, at the Hôtel de Ponthieu.

following the example of Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, the murderer of the Regent Murray, had taken the precaution to have a fleet horse in readiness at the back of the house, immediately took to flight and galloped off through the Porte Saint-Antoine into the open country, the fact that none of the Admiral's following was mounted rendering pursuit hopeless, while Coligny was assisted to his lodging and Ambroise Paré summoned to attend him.

Charles IX was playing tennis at the Louvre with the Duc de Guise and Téligny, when news of the attempted assassination was brought him. In a transport of fury, he dashed his racket to the ground, exclaiming, "*Mort de Dieu!* when shall I have a moment's peace?" and retired to his apartments "with sad and downcast countenance," upon which Guise, well knowing that suspicion would point to him as the author of the crime, promptly disappeared and remained in concealment for the rest of the day.

Paris was in a turmoil of excitement; the more timorous tradesmen promptly closed their shops. Jean le Charron, the Provost of the Merchants and the sheriffs took measures as on the day of a riot; they massed before the Hôtel de Ville the companies of archers, cross-bowmen, and arquebusiers, and caused the gates of the town to be guarded. But, to calm the fears of the citizens, they ordered the reopening of the shops.

A crowd of Protestant gentlemen, filled with alarm and indignation, hurried to Coligny's hôtel; while the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé proceeded to the Louvre to demand justice of the King. Charles "promised to do such justice upon the guilty person, his aiders and abettors as would satisfy the Admiral and his friends"; and the Queen-mother, who was present, "appeared to be very displeased, observing that it was a great outrage committed against the King, and that, if one supported it to-day, to-morrow they

would assume the audacity to do the same in the Louvre." Coligny having expressed the desire to see Charles IX, Catherine, who desired to prevent a private conversation, transformed the visit into a solemn demonstration of sympathy, and followed her son with the Court, the Princes of the Blood, and the great nobles. All the enemies of the Admiral were there: the Duc d'Anjou, the Duc de Nevers, Tavannes, and the Italian, Albert de Gondi, Baron de Retz, a creature of Catherine's. "*Mon père*," said the King, "the pain is yours, but the despite is mine"; and he vowed to leave no stone unturned to discover the perpetrators of the outrage. He nominated a commission of inquiry, begged the Admiral to remove to the Louvre, and, when the surgeons forbade this, sent a detachment of guards to protect him, and subsequently fifty arquebusiers under the Sieur de Cosseins, who, two days later, took a prominent part in the murder of Coligny. Finally, he assigned quarters to a number of the Protestant nobles in the Rue de Béthisy, where the Catholics were ordered to surrender their houses to them; invited the King of Navarre and Condé to summon their intimate friends to the Louvre, and requested the former to send some of his Swiss guards to Coligny's house.

Meanwhile, the commission appointed to investigate the affair had interrogated a lackey and an old woman, who were the only occupants of the house where the assassin had lain in ambush. The house belonged to a certain Piles de Villemar, a canon of Notre-Dame and formerly tutor to the Duc de Guise; but he was absent from Paris. These persons deposed that, on the preceding day, the Sieur de Chailly had brought the arquebusier to the house and recommended him to their care. Now, this Sieur de Chailly was *surintendant des affaires* of the Duc de Guise, and no one could entertain any doubt as to the culpability of the Guises. Charles IX ordered Nançay, the Captain of his Guards, to arrest Chailly, but that personage had already effected his escape from

Paris. "And if M. de Guise had not hidden himself all that day, the King would have caused him to be apprehended." The Queen-mother, without allowing her real sentiments to be debated, endeavoured to appease the King's resentment against the Guises. She justified the act by the desire, but too natural in a son, to avenge his father's murder, and recalled the fact that the Châtillons had, at the end of 1563, caused Charry, Colonel-General of the Infantry of the Royal Guard, who had served her so faithfully during her regency, to be assassinated.<sup>1</sup> But the young King persisted in a "passionate desire" to execute justice upon the guilty.

However, the assurances of the King failed to allay the anger and excitement of the Huguenots. The dastardly attempt upon their leader's life had roused them to the last pitch of exasperation. They openly accused the Guises of the crime, paraded in crowds before the Hôtel de Guise and the residence of the Duc d'Aumale, brandishing their swords and shouting anathemas, and beat any of the Guise's people whom they found in the streets. Armand de Piles entered the Louvre, at the head of 400 gentlemen, demanding instant vengeance on the assassin. The King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé supported his demand, and announced their intention of quitting Paris, if it were not complied with. Soon it began to be whispered that Catherine and Anjou had been parties to the outrage, for the would-be assassin's arquebus, which he had left behind him when he fled, was found to belong to one of Anjou's guards. A body of Huguenots presented themselves before the King and Queen-mother while at supper, and indulged in the most threatening language. The elder Pardail-

<sup>1</sup> Charry had been assassinated on December 31, 1563, on the Pont Saint-Michel, by two gentlemen of Andelot's suite, assisted by a Poitevin named Du Chastelier, whose brother had been killed by Charry in a duel. Charry had, earlier in the day, insulted Andelot on the staircase of the Louvre, but it seems very doubtful whether the latter was privy to the crime.

lan,<sup>1</sup> addressing Catherine, declared that if justice were not done, the Calvinists would execute it themselves ; while another of their leaders said to the King, alluding to the Admiral's wound, that it was an arm which would cost more than forty thousand arms.

That afternoon, and again early on the following morning, a meeting of the Huguenot chiefs was held at Coligny's house, in a room beneath that in which the Admiral was lying. The Vidame de Chartres and the minister Merlin urged that they should withdraw at once from Paris, taking their wounded leader with them.<sup>2</sup> But Téligny, acting no doubt on instructions from his father-in-law, strongly opposed such a step, declaring that he himself would answer for the good faith of the King, and it was eventually decided to go in a body to the Louvre on the Sunday, to accuse formally the Duc de Guise as the author of the crime, a resolution which came to the Queen-mother's ears.

Catherine and Anjou were terrified. Their machinations had recoiled upon their own heads ; Coligny would most certainly recover from his wound and would become more powerful than ever ; while their own complicity in the affair was within an ace of being discovered. If an inquiry were instituted, it was probable that Guise would not care to deny his complicity in an act which would greatly enhance his popularity among the mob, but would seek to shelter himself by pleading the orders of Anjou, Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, and, their guilt once publicly brought home to them, nothing would save them from disgrace and exile, if not from a worse fate.

It was necessary to act, and to act at once. Without a moment's delay, Catherine called her advisers to-

<sup>1</sup> Hector Pardaillan, Baron de Gondrin and de Montespan, from whom the Marquis de Montespan, the husband of Louis XIV's celebrated mistress, traced his descent. He was killed at the Louvre in the massacre of the following Sunday.

<sup>2</sup> The Maréchal de Montmorency had written offering to come himself, with five hundred horse, to escort Coligny to La Rochelle.



gether—her three Italian favourites, Retz, Nevers, and Birague, the unworthy successor of l'Hôpital in the office of Chancellor, and Tavannes—in the garden of the Tuileries, then outside the city walls; and there she and Anjou concerted with them the plan of a massacre of the Huguenot chiefs, beginning with Coligny, in which affair Guise should again be made to figure as the principal agent.

But to plot and plan was useless unless they could obtain the consent of the King—that feeble, neurotic, passionate, though well-meaning creature, “half-beast and wholly a child,” who was seldom for two days together of the same mind. Great as was still Catherine’s influence over her son, she was very doubtful whether it would be sufficient to induce him to execute so complete a *volte-face*, since it appears to have been late in the afternoon ere she ventured to approach him. Even then, if we are to believe Marguerite de Valois, who, however, knew nothing of the plot and is only repeating what she was subsequently told, the Queen-mother did not herself broach the subject to the King, but sent Retz, “from whom she knew he would take it better than from any one else,” to pave the way. Retz, with a frankness which could not fail to effect, proceeded to inform the King that he was wrong in supposing that the attempt against the Admiral had been instigated by the Duc de Guise alone, since the Queen-mother and the Duc d’Anjou had been partners in the affair; that their complicity was already suspected, while his Majesty himself was believed to have been a consenting party to the deed, and that the Huguenots, beside themselves with fury, intended to have resort to arms that very night.

Marguerite’s account lacks confirmation—the most dependable witnesses, such as Anjou and the Venetian Ambassadors, Michieli and Cavalli, make no mention of this interview; but there can be no question that when Catherine did approach her son, she admitted the

part which she and Anjou had taken in the attempted assassination of Coligny, and pointed out the danger which threatened, not only his mother and brother, but himself from the exasperation of the Admiral's followers, to which their rash and warlike demonstrations on the previous day, their menaces and their numbers gave only too much colour. Then, with diabolical ingenuity, she proceeded to recall to Charles's mind all the insults, real or imaginary, he had suffered at the hands of the Huguenots in general, and of Coligny in particular. She declared it to be the belief of all Catholic France that he had allowed his royal authority to be usurped by the Admiral and taunted him with being but a mere tool in the hands of an arrogant and ambitious heretic, who carried his insolence so far as to threaten the King with a renewal of the civil war, if he declined, at his bidding, to break with Spain.<sup>1</sup>

She insisted, and she called others to prove, that the Huguenots were already plotting; that some of the Protestant leaders had already left Paris to raise the kingdom, and that the time and place of their assembling had already been decided upon; that the Catholic leaders, exasperated in their turn, and despairing of any resolute action on the part of the King, had resolved to form an offensive and defensive league, and to appoint a captain-general, a course which would, in all likelihood, eventually end in his Majesty's deposition in favour of the Duc de Guise. Finally, she showed that, out of the peril which menaced them, there was but one way of escape: to strike first and anticipate the designs of the Huguenots, by putting Coligny and the other leaders

<sup>1</sup> When, on August 9, the Council, largely through the influence of Catherine, had decided against war with Spain, Coligny, turning to the Queen-mother, exclaimed: "Madame, the King refuses to enter on one war; God grant that another may not befall him, from which perhaps he will not have it in his power to withdraw!" The Admiral's enemies were not slow to interpret these words as a threat of civil war; but, as Coligny's English biographer, Mr. A. W. Whitehead, points out, it was probably merely intended as a warning that William of Orange and his followers would be thrown back on France, and that it would need force to dislodge them.



to death—there is no evidence that Catherine, at first, intended anything like a general massacre<sup>1</sup>—now that he had them in his grip, “gathered together and shut up, as in a cage, within the walls of Paris.”<sup>2</sup>

For over an hour Catherine reasoned and implored in vain. “The Queen my mother,” writes Marguerite de Valois, “had never experienced so much difficulty as in persuading the King that this counsel had been given for the good of the realm, because of the friendship he bore M. l’Amiral, La Nouë, and Téligny.” But the struggle was an unequal one. The unhappy King was completely unstrung by the events of the preceding day, exhausted from want of sleep, and in no condition to hold out against the importunities of the woman obedience to whom was still with him almost second nature. Slowly but surely Catherine wore him down, and, on a sudden, honour, compassion, every consideration which might have helped to deter him were forgotten, and he was seized by an ungovernable frenzy. “We then perceived in him a strange mutation, a marvellous and astonishing metamorphosis. Rising and imposing silence upon us, he swore, by God’s death, that, since we would have the Admiral killed, he gave his consent, on condition that every other Huguenot in France was put to death as well, so that not one should be left alive to reproach him.”<sup>3</sup>

Without losing an instant, Catherine sent for the Duc de Guise.

Nothing had been seen either of the duke or of his uncle since the attempt upon Coligny, but on the

<sup>1</sup> According to *le Discours du roy Henri III*, published in the *Mémoires d’État de Villeroy*, Catherine declared that “it would be sufficient to kill the Admiral, chief and author of all the civil wars, and that the Catholics, satisfied and contented with the sacrifice of *two or three men*, would remain in their obedience.” By an inversion of the usual order of things, the authenticity of this evidence, which was first published in 1623, is disputed by several seventeenth and eighteenth-century historians, Péréfixe, Mercier, Hénault, Millet, and Voltaire, but accepted by the majority of modern authorities on the period.”

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Michieli, *Relazione della Corte de Francia*.

<sup>3</sup> *Discours du roy Henri III*.



CHARLES IX IN 1570.

From a photograph by A. Giraudon, Paris, after a drawing in the Bibliothèque Nationale by François Clouet.

Saturday morning they presented themselves at the Louvre to request the King's permission to leave Paris and retire to their governments. They had perceived, they said, that their services were no longer acceptable to his Majesty; their servants had been arrested unjustly, and they themselves had been wickedly slandered. Charles received them "with a bad countenance and bitter words," telling them angrily that they might go where they pleased; he would know where to find them when he wanted them. Thereupon they quitted the palace, assembled their servants, and left the city by the Porte Saint-Antoine, but, having been informed by Catherine of what was in contemplation, they went no farther than the faubourg.

On receiving the Queen-mother's summons, Guise hastened to the Louvre, and there arranged with her that the massacre should take place in the early hours of the following morning, August 24, the Feast of St. Bartholomew.

"For Henri de Guise, it is the moment of vengeance, for which he has so long waited: all his thoughts, all his efforts, have been concentrated on this hoped-for hour. It arrives. There is only a night to assure success. He hurries to the Provost of the Merchants, causes the captains of the different quarters of the city to be called together, reminds them of the devotion of his father and of his grandfather to the interests of the Parisians, begs them to aid him in ridding himself of his enemies, who may be surprised and massacred without danger in the early morning. The King consents; it is for Paris to act."<sup>1</sup>

Guise having thus prepared the way, the final preparations for the sanguinary drama were soon completed. Nothing, indeed, was more easy to concert, since it coincided with the desires of the population of Paris to rise spontaneously against the detested heretics. Marcel and Charron, the past and present Provost of the Merchants

<sup>1</sup> Forneron.

were summoned to the Louvre, and asked how many men they could provide for the service of the King at a few hours' notice. They answered some twenty thousand. They were then informed, under a pledge of the strictest secrecy, that a Huguenot conspiracy had been discovered, and that, in order to frustrate it, they were to summon the city militia—those poltroons who had fled like sheep before a handful of Huguenot cavalry in the plain of Saint-Denis, but were ready enough to murder a sleeping enemy—and every man whom they could raise to assemble at midnight before the Hôtel de Ville, where they would receive further instructions. Every man was to wear a white linen sleeve on his left arm and a white cross on his hat, and a light was to be placed in each window. The gates were to be locked and guarded, the chains which protected the approach to the bridges raised, and all boats securely fastened to the banks, so that no one might cross the river.<sup>1</sup> To Guise, who had refused to entrust his personal vengeance to any hands save his own, was allotted the supreme task of slaying the Admiral, in which work he was to be assisted by Aumale, Henri d'Angoulême, and some of the Duc d'Anjou's Swiss guards. "The beast is in the toils," he observed; "he must not be allowed to escape."

The night wore on. Catherine retired to rest at her usual hour, and was followed to her chamber by the usual concourse of ladies, including her daughters, the Queen of Navarre and the Duchess of Lorraine. Marguerite perceived that the latter seemed very sad. Catherine, catching sight of the young bride, told her brusquely to go to bed; but, as she was making her curtsy, the Duchess of Lorraine took her by the arm, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu!* my sister, do

<sup>1</sup> "These orders," writes Giovanni Michieli, "were executed with the greatest diligence and the utmost secrecy, to such a degree that every one was in ignorance as to what his neighbour was doing, and, since no one was able to ascertain for what purpose the orders had been issued, each was so much more attentive to what was about to happen."  
—*Relazione della Corte di Francia.*

not go!" which caused her great alarm. "The Queen, my mother, perceived it, and, calling my sister, scolded her soundly and forbade her to tell me anything. My sister replied that it was unseemly to send me to be sacrificed like that, and that, without doubt, if they discovered anything, they would avenge themselves on me." But there was no weakness in Catherine. She preferred to risk her daughter's life than to compromise her projects. . . . "The Queen my mother replied that, if it pleased God, I should suffer no harm; but that, however that might be, it was necessary for me to go, for fear, if I stayed, that they should suspect something. I perceived that they were arguing, but could not understand what they said. My sister, melting to tears, bade me good-night, without daring to say anything further; and I departed, all frightened and bewildered, without knowing what I had to fear."

Charles IX was less hard. Catching sight of the Huguenot Comte de la Rochefoucauld, who was a favourite of his, and who had come to attend his *coucher*, on the point of leaving the chamber, he wished to save him, and called out: "Foucauld, don't go; we will gossip the rest of the night." "That cannot be," replied La Rochefoucauld, "for one must get some sleep." The King insisted; but the count, who had an assignation with the Dowager Princesse de Condé, replied: "Adieu, little master," and repaired to his lady-love's apartments, where he remained for nearly an hour. When he was leaving the Louvre, he saw all the companies of the royal guards—Swiss, Scottish, and French—drawn up in the courtyard of the palace. This so surprised him that he despatched one of his attendants, Mergez, to warn the King of Navarre. Mergez found Henri of Navarre in bed with his wife, and a number of Huguenot gentlemen, who had been attending his *coucher*, gathered in the adjoining wardrobe, some talking, others playing cards. Presently, the tapestries which separated the wardrobe from the corridor out-



side were drawn back, and Nançay, Captain of the Guards, looked in, and Mergez perceived that, before speaking, he counted the occupants of the room. Then he inquired if any of them wished to leave the palace, as the gates were about to be shut. But they replied that they intended to make a night of it.

Charles IX only remained for a short while in bed and then rose again, as did Catherine and Anjou, and all three stationed themselves in an embrasure of one of the windows of the King's apartments, facing the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. It had been arranged on the previous evening that the bell of the Palais de Justice was to give the signal for the massacre; but Catherine, fearing that at the last moment Charles might revoke the consent she had succeeded in wringing from him, had given orders, just before daybreak, for the bell of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois to sound the tocsin. The three criminals waited in a silence broken only by the beating of their own hearts, until the first streaks of dawn—the dawn of a beautiful summer morning—appeared in the eastern sky. Then they heard from some distance off the crack of a pistol-shot. Almost immediately afterwards, the tocsin rang out from the belfry of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, followed by the bell of the Palais de Justice, and then by those of all the churches in Paris. Arquebus-shots, pistol-shots, a babel of shouts resounded from all quarters of the town, and even in the Louvre. Hell had broken loose, and the most abominable crime in the annals of French history had begun!

According to the *Discours du roy Henri III*, the pistol-shot shattered what self-control remained to them, and, seized by a sudden panic, they sent a messenger in frantic haste to Guise to countermand all his instructions—he was to undertake nothing against the Admiral; he was to go to his own house and to stay there; but that Guise sent back word that it was too late; that Coligny was dead, and that there was nothing for it but to go on.



It was about four o'clock, in the grey of the dawn, that Guise rode down the Rue de Béthisy and drew rein at Coligny's door. He was accompanied by his uncle Aumale, Henri d'Angoulême, two Italian captains, Petrucci and Tosinghi, who had been lent him by the Duc de Nevers, Sarlabous, the governor of Le Havre, the Chevalier Altin, a gentleman in Anjou's service, Karl Dianovitz, commonly called Besme, a German adventurer in the service of the Cardinal de Lorraine,<sup>1</sup> and some of Anjou's Swiss guards, wearing the prince's colours, black, white, and green, under the command of one Studor von Winkelbach. A detachment of fifty men, under the Sieur de Cosseins, had, as we have said elsewhere, been posted to guard the house. Guise took their commander aside and informed him that "he had received permission to come and kill the Admiral, to avenge the death of his father."<sup>2</sup> Upon which Cosseins, though much astonished, promised him his co-operation.

After some delay, the door was opened by a sleepy-eyed lackey. He was immediately stabbed to death, while two or three Swiss who tried to defend the staircase were shot down. The noise awakened Coligny, who, with his chaplain Merlin, his German interpreter Nicholas Muss, Ambroise Paré, and two or three other persons, were sleeping above. "Monseigneur," said Paré, "they have broken into the house; we have no means of resisting them." "I have been long prepared to die," answered the Admiral; "but you must save yourselves, if you can; you can do nothing for me, and I have the presence of God."

He rose, and, wrapping himself in his dressing-gown, calmly awaited his fate, while his friends made their escape through a window opening on to the roof; only Nicholas Muss refused to obey his master's last command, and stayed to die with him. Coligny appears to have

<sup>1</sup> This Besme was the son of a Bohemian, but was born in Würtemberg. He was rewarded for the part he took in the murder of Coligny by the hand of a natural daughter of the Cardinal de Lorraine.

<sup>2</sup> Tavannes.

been under the impression that the Guises were his only enemies; and it was not until Cosseins himself entered the room, accompanied by Besme, Sarlabous, Altin, and three of Anjou's Swiss guards,<sup>1</sup> that he knew that his king—that king who had loaded him with favours and but two days before expressed so much indignation at the attempt upon his life—had betrayed him.

“Are you the Admiral?” asked Besme.

“I am,” was the firm reply. “You ought, young man, to respect my age and my infirmities; but do your will—my life will not be much the shorter for it.” Then the pride of the great noble and of the soldier reasserted itself, and he exclaimed bitterly: “At least let some man, and not this *goujat*, put me to death!”

The assassins hesitated a moment, and one of them afterwards averred that he had never seen any man confront death with a countenance so serene. Then Besme thrust Coligny through with a boar-spear, and the Swiss fell upon him with their swords. He, “feeling their swords freezing in his body, seized the window, so as not to be flung below,” and clung to it desperately. Presently, from the courtyard below came the voice of Guise, calling impatiently: “Besme, have you finished?”

“It is done,” was the reply.

“Throw him down, then,” cried Guise. “M. d'Angoulême will not believe unless he sees.” And Sarlabous, seizing the Admiral round the waist, tore him from his hold, and flung him into the courtyard below. There was still life in the mutilated body, for, as it fell, one hand clutched at the window-bar. The Bastard d'Angoulême, according to some authorities, Guise himself, dismounted, wiped the blood from the disfigured face, in order to make sure of its identity, kicked the corpse contemptuously aside, and rode away. The two Italians, who had also remained below, then rifled the body, Tosinghi taking the Admiral's gold

<sup>1</sup> Their names were Conrad Burg, Martin Koch, and Leonard Grünefelder.

chain, while Petrucci cut off the head and carried it away, with the intention of sending it to Rome and claiming the reward which had once been offered by the Pope for the head of the great enemy of the Church of Rome.<sup>1</sup> The populace, which had by this time gathered from all parts, seized upon the headless trunk and dragged it through the streets, with yells of ferocious joy.

Scarcely had the crime been accomplished than Guise received vexatious news. A number of prominent Huguenots, including Montgomery and the Vidame de Chartres, who had so strongly urged his friends to leave Paris after the attempt upon Coligny, had obstinately refused to lodge within the town, declaring that the air of the faubourgs was more healthy, and had taken up their quarters in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, outside the ramparts. Roused by the sound of the tocsin, they believed, as Coligny had at first, that it was an insurrection raised by the Guises, and wished to hasten to the succour of the King. Being unable to procure boats to cross the river, they presented themselves at the Porte de Buci, where they were received with arquebus-shots and cries of "*Tuez! Tuez!*" Whereupon, perceiving the real state of affairs, they hurried back to their lodgings, saddled their horses, and gained the open country. Guise, informed of their escape, galloped to the Porte de Buci; but the keys, with those of the other gates, had been taken to the Hôtel de Ville the previous night, and there was considerable delay before they were fetched. Then, with a hundred of his followers, he started in pursuit of the fugitives and followed them as far as Montfort l'Amaury, when, recognising the impossibility of overtaking them, he returned to Paris on the Sunday evening, utterly worn out. In Forneron's opinion, it is not improbable that

<sup>1</sup> The head of Coligny never reached Rome, and what became of it is not known. In all probability, it was intercepted and buried by the friendly governor of one of the towns through which it passed on its way to Italy.

his pursuit of Montgomery and his friends was merely a pretext to dissociate himself, once his private feud with Coligny was settled, from an affair which he perceived must sooner or later be reprobated by many as a crime, by more as a blunder. Nevertheless, it was certainly a very imprudent step thus to leave Paris, without troubling about the direction of the unchained populace, without distrusting Catherine, who would impute to the absent all the responsibility of the day.<sup>1</sup>

All the long summer day the massacre had continued. The King's guards and the nobles of the suites of Anjou and Montpensier guided the rabble to the carnage, crying out that the Huguenots had attempted to attack the King in the Louvre, and that no quarter was to be given. Tavannes galloped like a madman through the streets, shouting, "Let blood! Let blood! Bleeding is as good in August as in May." The populace needed no encouragement; for years it had been hoping for some such chance as this, and it made the most of it. All the Protestant gentlemen whom the King had established in the vicinity of the Admiral's lodging, to assist in defending Coligny in case of need, shared the fate of their leaders. Among them was La Rochefoucauld, with whom Charles IX had been jesting a few hours before. He was awakened by some one knocking at his door and demanding admission in the King's name. It was opened, and six masked men entered. He believed that one of them was the King in person, who had come to play some practical joke at his expense, and laughingly begged his supposed Majesty not to be too hard upon him. The answer was a mortal stab from a poniard. Téligny was shot by some of Anjou's guards, while endeavouring to escape over the roofs of the houses. The Sieur de la Force and the elder of his two sons were also killed by Anjou's guards, and the younger—a lad of twelve—only saved his life by hiding himself beneath the corpses of his father and brother, where

<sup>1</sup> Forneron, *les Ducs de Guise et leur époque*.



he lay all day, counterfeiting death, until rescued by a compassionate citizen. Francourt, chancellor to the King of Navarre, Groslot, bailiff of Orléans, and a number of other prominent Huguenots, were surprised and slain in their beds or in their hiding-places on the roofs. So utterly unprepared were the victims that very little resistance was offered; here and there a man fell fighting; here and there a house was held for an hour or two against the mob, but with very few exceptions it was sheer butchery.

Within the Louvre, the massacre assumed a still more hideous character. Immediately after the attempted assassination of Coligny, Charles IX had advised Henri of Navarre and the Prince de Condé to summon to the Louvre as many Protestant gentlemen as could be lodged there, in order to be in a position to repel any aggressive action on the part of the Guises, who were always accompanied by a strong retinue. These gentlemen had entered the Louvre trusting to the protection of the King; they were lodged in his palace, at his invitation, yet hardly one of them was spared.

At daybreak, Henri of Navarre rose and announced his intention of going to play tennis until the King was awake, when he meant to demand justice of him for the attack upon Coligny. He left his apartments, and all his gentlemen, to the number of thirty or forty, with him. At the foot of the staircase they were all arrested and conducted to the King's cabinet, where they found the Prince de Condé and his attendants, who had been arrested almost at the same time. "Take that *canaille* away!" cried Charles; and the hapless followers of Navarre and Condé were led out. Those who endeavoured to escape were killed in the palace, while the rest were driven into the courtyard of the Louvre and mercilessly butchered, under the very eyes of their royal host, whose protection they demanded with despairing cries. One of them, the brave Armand de Piles, who only on the previous morning had bathed

at the same house as Charles IX, assisted him to swim and supported his chin, glanced up at the window where the King stood. "And this," he cried, "is the good faith of the King!" The next moment, he was cut down. The unfortunate young monarch had been forced by Catherine and Anjou to show himself to his guards during their repugnant work, for otherwise they would not have believed that the King of France could tranquilly order the murder of his own guests.

The courtyard, the apartments, the corridors of the Louvre were red with blood, encumbered with corpses; men were killed even in the presence of the princesses. "As I was fast asleep," writes Marguerite de Valois, "comes a man, striking with hands and feet at the door, and shouting: 'Navarre! Navarre!' My nurse, imagining that it was the King my husband, runs quickly to the door. It was M. de L  ran,<sup>1</sup> who had a sword-cut on the elbow and a halberd-wound in the arm, and was still pursued by five archers, who all entered the room at his heels. He, seeking to save himself, threw himself on my bed. I, feeling that these men had hold of me, flung myself on the *ruelle*, and he after me, still clasping me across the body. This man was a total stranger to me, and I did not know whether he came there to insult me, or whether the archers were against him or against me. We were both of us screaming, and one was just as much alarmed as the other. At last, God willed that M. de Nan  ay, Captain of the Guards, should come upon the scene, who, finding me in this plight, could not refrain from laughing, notwithstanding the compassion he felt for me. He severely reprimanded the archers for their indiscretion, ordered them out, and granted me the life of the poor man who was holding me, whom I caused to be put to bed and to have his wounds dressed in my cabinet, until such time

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel de L  vis, Vicomte de L  ran, one of the King of Navarre's equerries. Alexandre Dumas *p  re*, in his celebrated romance, *la Reine Margot*, makes La M  le the hero of this adventure.



as he was fully cured. While I was changing my night-gown—for he had covered me all over with blood—M. de Nançay acquainted me with all that was happening, and assured me that the King my husband was in the King's chamber and had suffered no harm. Then, making me wrap myself in a bed-gown, he conducted me to the chamber of my sister, Madame de Lorraine, where I arrived more dead than alive. As we entered the ante-chamber, the doors of which were all open, a gentleman named Bourse was run through by a halberd within three paces of me, as he was flying from the archers who were pursuing him. I fell to one side, well-nigh swooning, into M. de Nançay's arms, thinking that the thrust would have impaled us both."

While their generals, their guards, and their attendants were being thus immolated, Charles IX, who was beside himself with passion, informed the two princes that all that was being done was by his orders, that they had allowed themselves to be made the leaders of his enemies, and that their lives were justly forfeited. As, however, they were his kinsmen and connections, he would pardon them, provided they conformed to the religion of their ancestors, the only one he would henceforth tolerate in his realm. If not, they must prepare to share the fate of their friends. Condé courageously replied that he refused to believe the King capable of violating his most sacred pledges, but that he was accountable for his religion to God alone, and would remain faithful to it, even if it cost him his life. Navarre, of a more politic and wary disposition, and, besides, somewhat indifferent on the subject of religion, assumed a more humble and conciliatory tone, begging the King not to compel him to outrage his conscience, and to consider that he was now, not only his kinsman, but closely connected with him by marriage. Charles, after indulging in terrible threats against Condé, finally dismissed them saying that he gave them three days for reflection, and directing that they should be strictly guarded.

Meantime, the carnage was extending from the environs of the Louvre and of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois to every quarter of the town. The Protestant nobles and gentlemen having been killed, the assassins turned their attention to the magistrates, the bourgeois, the artisans accused of heresy. The mob, led by a goldsmith called Crucé, a butcher named Pezou, and one Kaerver, who, on ordinary occasions, followed the mild vocation of a bookseller, went from street to street, breaking open the doors of the houses suspected of concealing heretics. Some were killed after having pointed out where their valuables were hidden, in order to purchase their lives; others were dragged off towards the prisons, though few of them ever arrived there, being stabbed to death on the way or thrown into the river. So unrivalled an opportunity of paying off old scores or of securing coveted advantages was eagerly seized. One man denounced his competitor in business; another his rival in love; a third a relative to whose property he expected to succeed; an unfaithful wife disclosed her husband's hiding-place; a girl led the assassins to the house of a former admirer, who had discarded her. Bussy d'Amboise killed his cousin, the Marquis de Renel, to decide a dispute between them concerning some property; La Pataudière, the intendant of the Duc de Montpensier, assassinated the general of the finances of Poitou, in order to secure his post; Tanchou, the Provost of the Marshals, imprisoned one of the King's secretaries, Laménée, forced him to surrender his estate of Versailles to the Comte de Retz, at a merely nominal price, and killed him afterwards. A large number of Catholics, and even some churchmen, were among the victims,<sup>1</sup> as were also three Englishmen who had failed to gain the shelter of their Embassy.<sup>2</sup> "It was enough to cry

<sup>1</sup> Among these, by a singular coincidence, was the canon Piles de Villemar, that former tutor of the Duc de Guise who had lent his house in the cloisters of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois to conceal Maurevert and his arquebus.

<sup>2</sup> "Then I made [the King] understand that three of our nation were

of any one, 'He is a Huguenot,' and he was murdered at once," writes Giovanni Michieli. Neither age nor sex was respected; women were butchered and flung into the Seine, the murderers having first hacked off their hands and arms to possess themselves of their rings and bracelets; some, after being killed, were suspended by their hair from the piles of the bridges. A man found in a house two children sleeping in the same cradle, and threw them into the river. Even the Catholic children participated in the massacre, and several of them set upon and tore to pieces a little Huguenot who was just beginning to toddle.

The unhappy King, "intoxicated by the smell of blood, seemed less like a man than a beast of prey." He cried incessantly, "*Tuez! Tuez!*" and, according to Brantôme, seizing an arquebus, fired from the windows of the Louvre upon the Huguenots who had taken to the river in the hope of evading their pursuers. And the chronicler adds that his Majesty "took very great pleasure in seeing pass beneath his windows the corpses of more than 5,000 persons slain or drowned, which were floating down the river."

All the depravity which the elegant manners of Catherine's Court usually concealed was laid bare on this occasion, as in some hideous bacchanalian orgy. The Court passed in review the corpses which had been piled up, in the fashion of a trophy, before the gates of the Louvre, and the Queen-mother's maids of honour, and even Catherine herself, might have been seen examining with obscene remarks the stripped and mutilated bodies of the Huguenot gentlemen of their acquaintance.

Pillage went on simultaneously with murder, and the booty was immense. Brantôme assures us that some of his friends amassed stolen property to the value of

slain and divers were spoiled, for which he showed himself to be very sorry, and said that if the parties' offenders could be produced there should be exemplary punishment. I showed his Majesty it would be hard to produce them, the disorder being so general, the sword being committed to the common people."—Walsingham to Smith, September 2, 1572.

10,000 crowns; and the Nuncio Salviati wrote to the Vatican while the massacre was still in progress: "The Parisians are addressing themselves to pillage with extraordinary eagerness; many persons never imagined that they would one day possess the horses and plate which are this evening in their hands."

The fury and rapacity of the populace exceeded the intentions of those who had set them on, and began to frighten them. "Blood and death ran through the streets in so horrible a manner that their Majesties, who were the authors of it, were alarmed." Towards noon, the municipal authorities, terrified by the murders, and still more by the robberies, begged the King to stop the massacre. Orders were at once issued to that effect, but produced no result, as the mob was by this time completely out of hand. By the evening, Catherine had begun to have serious doubts as to whether it would be wise for the Court to assume the responsibility for these atrocities, and, with her usual resourcefulness, proceeded to travesty events and endeavour to throw the blame on the shoulders of the Duc de Guise. In great haste, she caused the King to write to the governors of all the provinces and of every important town a letter in which he declared that "the Guises, who have, as every one knows, no little influence in this town, had risen the preceding night; and that the King had had enough to keep himself safe, with his brothers, in his château of the Louvre," during this "sedition occasioned by the private quarrel of long standing between the Houses of Guise and Châtillon."

When Guise returned from his futile pursuit of Montgomery and his friends, he learned that Catherine had taken advantage of his absence to seek, by a skilful change of front, to ruin him, after having destroyed the Admiral. He hastened immediately to get together and save the Huguenots, and provided an asylum in his hôtel for the daughter of the Chancellor l'Hôpital and to more than a hundred Reformers. At the same

time, he informed their Majesties that he must decline to leave the capital or to shield them in any way from the consequences of their action. He had no wish, he said, to be set up as a mark for every heretic in Christendom, and, if the Sovereign were afraid to own the deed, how much more cause was there for a mere subject to fear?

Guise's not altogether disinterested generosity in protecting the Protestants was badly received by the Parisians. Public opinion, indeed, was, for the moment, frankly favourable to the *coup d'état* and was indignant that, on the second day, the Duc de Guise should wish to decline his part in it. It was even asserted that he was endeavouring to save the heretics in order to prolong the civil war: "Monsieur de Guise, in exempting others, was calumniated for not wishing the extinction of the pretext for taking up arms."<sup>1</sup>

Catherine, recognising in time that popularity would be acquired by those who had given orders for the massacre, forthwith operated a new manœuvre, ceased to attribute to Guise what was regarded as an honour, and thought only of gaining partisans, by boasting of having taken the necessary measures to save the religion which was in peril and to guarantee peace. On the Tuesday (August 26), she went to the Palais de Justice and informed the Parlement that all that had been done had been by her orders; and the following day the Parlement published a decree which condemned Coligny and confiscated his property.

Catherine had already resolved to associate the rest of France with the crime; but, in this second phase, she redoubled her precautions, abstained from writing any letter or allowing the King to write one, and surrounded herself with so much mystery that it was possible to deny the participation of the royal authority in the subsequent massacres.<sup>2</sup> The King, on the 25th, despatched mes-

<sup>1</sup> Tavannes.

<sup>2</sup> These precautions were so well taken that Albani, the learned author



sengers to the principal towns with verbal orders to the authorities to have the most important Protestants put to death; on the 28th, he forbade the executions. It was a succession of orders and counter-orders, which left full liberty to the popular passions. Wherever the authorities hesitated, the Protestants were lost; and from August 25 to October 3 massacres took place at different points in the realm. At Meaux, 200 Huguenots were murdered. The slaughter at Orléans lasted three days and accounted for 500 victims. At Troyes and at Rouen, bands of armed men forced the doors of the prisons and despatched the Protestants who were confined in them. At Lyons the populace replaced the executioner when he wearied of his work and butchered between 600 and 800 persons. At Toulouse, two counsellors to the Parlement guided the assassins to the prisons. At Bordeaux, the governor of the Château-Trompette organised a regular massacre after the manner of Paris, in concert with the municipal authorities and the captains of the citizen militia. Happily, there were governors and lieutenants of the King here and there who showed themselves humane. Thus, the Duc de Longueville, in Picardy, Chabot-Charry at Dijon, Goudes in Dauphiné, Matignon in Normandy, and the Vicomte d'Orthe at Bayonne imprisoned the Huguenots in order to save them, caused the prisons to be closely guarded, and so succeeded in preventing any massacre.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to arrive at an exact estimate of the number of lives lost in the massacres, for contemporary records place it anywhere between 1,000 and 10,000 in Paris, and between 10,000 and 100,000 in the provinces.

of the *Vita di Caterina de' Medici*, denies that she had any knowledge of the massacres in the provinces, just as though she had not at that moment the sole authority in France.

<sup>1</sup> Guise, on his return to his government of Champagne, also did all he could to protect the Huguenots, and, except at Troyes, few outrages were committed. In November, in accordance with the King's directions to see what could be done "to persuade the nobles of his province to return frankly and of their own free will to the Catholic religion," he set out on a sort of missionary journey to the larger towns; but his pious labours met with little success.



Probably, the number killed in the capital was between 3,000 and 4,000, and De Thou's calculation of 20,000 in the provinces is perhaps not beyond the mark.

Catherine de' Medici, the *inspiratrice* of the St. Bartholomew, passed for the firmest support of Catholicism. The people of Paris proclaimed her the mother of the kingdom and the preserver of Christianity; the Pope, who had caused the Vatican to be illuminated and a medal to be struck in remembrance of this great day, sent the Cardinal Orsini to bear to the Very Christian King and his mother his felicitations and those of the Sacred College. When Philip II heard the news, he showed, "contrary to his nature and custom, so much joy that he made it more manifest than in all the successful adventures and fortunes that had come to him. He began to laugh"; he praised "sometimes the son for having such a mother . . . then the mother for having such a son." Catherine triumphed at the astonishment of his Catholic Majesty: "Am I as bad a Catholic as Don Francisco de Alava pretended?" she demanded of an envoy of the Duke of Alva.

Yet on that horrible day, as M. Mariéjol very truly observes, she and her son were perhaps the only ones who had not the excuse of fanaticism.<sup>1</sup> "She had wished to slay Coligny to rid herself of a rival; the *coup* failing, she had been pushed by fear to annihilate the party. But she did not dream for a moment of substituting a Catholic for a Protestant policy. These great projects far surpassed her conceptions and her power. All at once, she returned to her petty calculations, to her projects of marriage, intriguing with all the world, coquetting with Elizabeth of England, as well as with Philip II. She was so much a stranger to religious passions that she did not suspect that people might be disinclined to treat with her after her crime."

At the same time that she demanded the price of her great service from Philip II, she resumed her relations

<sup>1</sup> Lavissee, *Histoire de France*.

with Louis of Nassau, and continued to negotiate with the German Protestants, assuring them that what had been done to "the Admiral and his accomplices had not been done out of hatred for the New Religion." The Legate, who brought the compliments of the Holy See, was obliged to wait a long time at Avignon before receiving permission to continue his journey, and, on his entry into Paris, he was not received with the usual honours. Nor did he succeed in obtaining from the King either his adhesion to the league against the Turk or his approval of the Council of Trent. These modifications were intended to convince the sovereigns and the Protestant peoples that they were mistaken in regard to the character of the St. Bartholomew. Montluc, sent into Poland to support the candidature of the Duc d'Anjou for the throne of the Jagelons, made the same declarations, and Catherine did not doubt that the Polish Protestants would vote for her son. She had apparently forgotten the St. Bartholomew.

## CHAPTER XXV

Protestantism saved by the resistance of the popular element in the Reform party—Fourth War of Religion: siege of La Rochelle—*Rapprochement* between the Huguenots and the *Politiques*—The Duc d'Alençon, Charles IX's youngest brother, becomes the secret head of the confederacy—The war is terminated by the Edict of Boulogne—Anjou elected King of Poland—His reluctance to leave France—Reconciliation between him and the Duc de Guise—His departure for Poland—Affray at Saint-Germain between Guise and Ventabrun—The Conspiracy of the *Politiques*—Failure of Guित्रy's *coup de main* at Saint-Germain—Panic-stricken flight of the Court to Paris—Energetic measures of Catherine—Death of Charles IX.

IF, for a moment, Catherine had deluded herself into the belief that the Huguenot party was expiring at her feet, she was soon to learn that religions do not die beneath the knives of assassins. Coligny, La Rochefoucauld, Soubise, Piles, and other aristocratic leaders had perished in the St. Bartholomew; Navarre and Condé had been constrained to renounce their faith; the Protestant nobility was disheartened and disorganised by the loss of its chiefs. But the popular element in the Reform party saved it, and raised the banner which was falling from the hands of the nobility. The citizens of La Rochelle, Montauban, and Sancerre continued the struggle which the Bourbons and Châtillons had begun, demanding, not only religious toleration, but the redress of political grievances; and other towns in the South and West followed their example.

The Government determined on the reduction of La Rochelle, and a formidable army was despatched thither, under the command of Anjou. All the princes accompanied it: the Duc d'Alençon, the "converted" Bourbons, Guise, his younger brother Mayenne, and

their uncle Aumale. La Rochelle, however, offered an heroic and desperate resistance, and at the end of four months the royal army had lost 20,000 men, including Aumale, and was no nearer success than when the trenches were opened. Meanwhile Anjou, thanks to the dexterity of his mother's diplomatic agents, had been elected King of Poland; and, on the pretext that it was undesirable that the Polish Ambassadors should find him engaged in the siege of a Protestant town, acceptable terms were offered to the Rochellois, and the siege was raised.

The Court, indeed, was in no condition to carry on the war. It was becoming daily more evident that the St. Bartholomew had been not only a crime, but a blunder of the most fatal kind. The moderate Catholics throughout France were shocked and horrified; while the Montmorencies and the leaders of the Third Party were convinced that the Queen-mother intended their ruin after that of the Bourbons and the Châtillons. The result was a *rapprochement* between the *Politiques*—as the Third Party had come to be called—and the Huguenots which threatened serious danger to Catherine's plans. The secret head of this confederacy was the Duc d'Alençon, who had long chafed under the subjection to which his brother's dislike and his mother's indifference had relegated him, and was determined to assert himself at all hazards. Alençon, who had taken no part in the massacre of August 24, and had even openly censured it, had been, since 1571, a candidate for the hand of Elizabeth of England—*vice* Anjou, retired—the suggested alliance meeting with much apparent favour from that astute princess, though she probably never had the least intention of entering into it. He had, at one time, conceived the project of escaping from the Court and taking refuge in England; but his intentions were suspected and he was kept under close surveillance. The King even opened the letters which he received from Elizabeth and dictated the replies to his brother, to the latter's intense mortification.

Compelled to betake himself, together with Navarre and Condé, to the siege of La Rochelle, he there quarrelled so violently with Anjou that they were with difficulty prevented from coming to blows; and, subject as he was to constant restraint and humiliation, the young prince was ripe for any mischief.

In the early summer of 1573 Elizabeth intimated to the French Court that, unless peace were concluded, she would break off the negotiations for her marriage with Alençon and send English troops to the assistance of the Huguenots. This threat, coupled with the election of Anjou to the Polish throne, induced Catherine to return to a pacific policy, and, in July, the Edict of Boulogne granted to the Protestants even greater concessions than they had been promised by the Peace of Saint-Germain. But Alençon and Henry of Navarre remained the secret chiefs of the Huguenots and disaffected Catholics, and during the remainder of the reign of Charles IX there were nothing but rebellions, conspiracies, arrests, and executions.

The new King of Poland seemed in no hurry to take possession of his throne, and manifested very little enthusiasm for what he regarded as a kind of exile, far removed from the Court of the Valois and the pleasures which he held so dear. He had become so desperately enamoured of the young Princesse de Condé that the prospect of parting from her was extremely distasteful to him, and he also feared that, in the event of the death of Charles IX—the unhappy King, who had been a changed man since the St. Bartholomew, was now in a consumption, and it was obvious that he had not long to live—his absence might result in his younger brother Alençon seizing the throne. These considerations led him to linger in Paris more than a month after the departure of the Polish envoys, and he would no doubt have postponed his departure still longer, had not Charles, who had come to regard all the chief actors in the St. Bar-

tholomew with loathing and hatred, informed him one day that France was not large enough to hold them both, and that, "if he did not go of his own free will, he would make him go by force. To ensure the departure of his detested brother, the King accompanied him as far as Vitry, where he was attacked by fever and unable to proceed farther. Catherine parted from her favourite son at La Fère. "Go, my son," said she, as she bade him adieu. "Go; you will not be long absent."

Guise had become reconciled to Anjou on the eve of the latter's departure for Poland, and had even expressed his willingness to accompany him to his northern kingdom. But Catherine objected, on the ground that Guise was always desirous of setting the world astir; and so Mayenne, who was of a less restless disposition, went instead. There was probably little sincerity about this reconciliation, for the hatred between the two young men was far too deep ever to be eradicated; but Anjou feared that Guise might join the party of Alençon, and Guise, aware that the days of Charles IX were numbered, considered it advisable to disarm Catherine, who would be more powerful than ever when her favourite son succeeded to the throne.

It is probable, however, that Anjou would never have ventured to quit France could he not have relied on the maternal vigilance to safeguard his interests. Catherine, on her side, devoted all her attention to watching her youngest son and the two Bourbons, the only persons whom she considered threatened danger to her idol. But her eyes remained closed to the secret relations which Guise maintained with the populace and the magistracy of Paris, and to his intrigues with the King of Spain, which were to be the cause of infinite trouble in the not very distant future. So absorbed was she by this one idea that she endeavoured to ruin the only family which, in the Catholic faction, was strong enough to dispute the domination of the Guises, and took the duke's part against the Montmorencies in a



singular adventure, the cause of which was a foolish young man named Ventabrun.

Ventabrun, it appears, had left Guise's service for that of the Maréchal de Montmorency, and Guise had forbidden him ever to present himself before him again, swearing that, if he did, he would run his sword through his body. But one evening in February 1574, at Saint-Germain, as the duke was descending the staircase, after an audience of the King and Queen-mother, in the latter's apartments, he encountered Ventabrun, who ventured to address him very insolently. Guise, without more ado, drew his sword; the other fled up the stairs, and tripped on the top step, when Guise ran him through and left him for dead on the landing. Then, returning to Catherine's apartments, he asked pardon of the King for having killed Ventabrun, "who had informed him that his wife and M. de Montmorency intended to kill him."

"The common opinion was," writes Bouillon, "that they wished to trip up M. de Montmorency." Catherine, in fact, caused Ventabrun, who had drawn his sword in self-defence, to be arrested, while Guise was troubled no further.<sup>1</sup> It was remarked, at the same time, that Maurevert, who had attempted to assassinate Coligny, had been seen at Saint-Germain.

This affair caused an immense sensation and greatly alarmed and angered the four Montmorency brothers, and hastened the outbreak of the rebellion known as the Conspiracy of the *Politiques*. Favoured by the illness of the King and the departure of Anjou for Poland, a vast conspiracy enveloped the country. Montgomery, who, after his escape from Paris on St. Bartholomew's Day, had taken refuge in England, was to make a descent on the Norman coast; Louis of Nassau was to invade France from the Netherlands; the Duc

<sup>1</sup> "He shall be charged," writes the English Ambassador, Dale, "that he did attempt to draw his sword in the Court, when Guise did hurt him, which in Guise is thought a small fault."

de Bouillon to open the gates of Sedan; La Noue to occupy the fortresses of Poitou; Montbrun to make himself master of Dauphiné; while Damville, Governor of Languedoc, which he ruled with almost sovereign authority, had promised to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality towards the Huguenots of that province and of Guienne. Finally, a bold Huguenot chief, the Sieur de Guitry-Bertichères, at the head of several hundred men, was charged to force the gates of the Château of Saint-Germain, where the Court had been residing since its return from Vitry, and carry off Alençon and Henri of Navarre.

The plans of the conspirators were carefully laid, but Guitry's enterprise, on which the success of the whole movement hinged, failed, through his own precipitation. Owing to some misunderstanding, Guitry anticipated the day, and appeared with his men in the environs of Saint-Germain some time before he was expected. Catherine's suspicions were at once aroused, and her remarkable skill in unravelling the tangled threads of even the most complicated intrigues soon placed her in possession of the whole plot. In the early hours of the following morning (February 23-24), she hurried the Court off to Paris. The King travelled in a litter, surrounded by the Swiss in battle-array, as during the retreat from Meaux; the Queen-mother followed in her coach, with the King of Navarre and Alençon, whom she was determined not to allow out of her sight, and who must have felt extremely uncomfortable; while another coach contained the Queens Élisabeth and Marguerite. The utmost consternation prevailed, and the Catholic courtiers fled terror-stricken, in the full belief that the avengers of the St. Bartholomew were behind them. Some galloped madly along the high-road; others hurried to the river and took to the boats they found there; every kind of conveyance to be found in the neighbourhood was pressed into the service of the fugitives, and those unable to procure one travelled

on foot, expecting every moment to be overtaken by the Huguenots and cut to pieces. The Cardinals de Bourbon, de Lorraine, and de Guise escaped on horseback, "clinging to their saddle-bows with both hands, as frightened of their horses as of their enemies."

Meanwhile, the rebels had risen in arms and issued a manifesto demanding various reforms, though it was obvious that these were only a cloak for their real intentions, and that, should the rising prove successful, its effect would be to deprive the King of Poland of the succession to the throne, which must speedily become vacant, in favour of the more accommodating Alençon. Catherine, however, invested with full powers by the King's illness, took prompt and energetic measures to meet the danger. Three armies were despatched against the rebels of Normandy, the South, and Central France; Navarre and Alençon, who were found to be planning an attempt to escape, with the connivance of the latter's favourites, La Môle and Coconnas, were shut up in the keep of the Château of Vincennes, and a commission appointed to examine them, while the two gentlemen were brought to trial on a charge of high treason, condemned to death, and executed; the Maréchaux de Montmorency and de Cossé, who had had the temerity to come to Court to endeavour to justify their conduct, were seized and thrown into the Bastille, and orders were sent to Amiens for the arrest of Condé, who fled to Strasbourg, where he lost no time in returning to the faith from which in his heart he had never wavered.

On May 31 of that year, the unhappy Charles IX expired, "rejoicing that he left no heir in such an age, since he knew, of his own sad experience, how wretched was the state of a child-king, and how wretched the kingdom over which a child ruled." On the previous day, he had publicly declared the King of Poland his lawful heir and successor, and his mother Regent, until the latter returned to France.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Measures adopted by Catherine to secure the succession for the King of Poland—Execution of Montgomery—Flight of Henri III from Cracow—He visits Vienna and Italy before returning to France—His treacherous conduct towards Damville—Meeting between the new King and the Royal Family at Bourgoin—His reception of Henri of Navarre and Alençon—Death of the Princesse de Condé—Extravagant grief of Henri III at the loss of his mistress—He takes to devotion and joins the Flagellants—Death of the Cardinal de Lorraine—The King demands the hand of Louise de Vaudémont—Premature joy of the Guises—*Sacre* and marriage of Henri III—Character of the new King—His follies and extravagances—His "*mignons*"—Quarrels between the King's favourites and those of *Monsieur*—Du Guast and Bussy d'Amboise—An unsuccessful ambushade—Madame de Sauve—Guise busies himself in strengthening his positions and pays assiduous court to the populace of Paris.

ON the morrow of the death of Charles IX, Catherine wrote to the new King: "Do not delay your departure on any consideration, for we have need of you. You know how much I love you, and when I reflect that you will no more budge from us, that makes me remain patient. The late King, your brother, has charged me to preserve this realm for you; I shall spare no effort in my power to transmit it to you intact and tranquil."

The Queen-mother exhibited both energy and ability in securing the succession for her favourite son. She made overtures to La Noue, who was still in Poitou, opened negotiations with the Rochellois, and succeeded in persuading Damville to return to his allegiance. Her task was facilitated by the fact that the leaders of the Huguenot-*Politique* revolt were in her power, the Maréchaux de Cossé and de Montmorency being safe in the Bastille, and Alençon and Henri of Navarre under watch and ward at Vincennes; Condé alone had escaped her clutches.

In one instance only did Catherine depart from the conciliatory policy which she had determined to pursue. The gallant Montgomery, who had been taken prisoner at Domfront, in Normandy, was brought to Paris, tried by the Parlement for high treason, and condemned to a traitor's death. Placed in a tumbril, with his hands tied behind his back, he was conveyed to the Place de Grève, and there beheaded and quartered. The Queen-mother herself, L'Estoile tells us, witnessed the execution, "and was at length avenged, as she had so long desired, for the death of the late King Henri, her husband."

Although Henri de Valois had only occupied the throne of Poland some nine months, he was already heartily tired of his kingdom, both the people and the customs of which were utterly distasteful to one of his indolent and luxurious temperament, and had been impatiently awaiting the event which should recall him to France. So soon, therefore, as the news of his brother's death reached him, he quitted his sombre palace at Cracow, secretly in the middle of the night, accompanied by some of his French attendants, and rode without drawing rein until he had crossed the Austrian frontier, hotly pursued by his indignant subjects, who, singularly enough, had conceived for him a great affection, and wished to compel him to remain their ruler. The explanation he subsequently condescended to give of this escapade was that the condition of France was so disturbed that even a week's delay might imperil the succession. Nevertheless, having once shaken the dust of his adopted country off his feet, he seemed in no hurry to return to his own; he preferred to travel by way of Vienna and Turin, where he extravagantly rewarded the hospitality of the Duke of Savoy by the restoration of Pinerolo, the gate of Italy; and it was not until the beginning of September that he turned his steps towards France.

The Duke of Savoy had at least repaid Henri's generosity

by good advice. He had urged him to conciliate the *Politiques*, and to re-establish peace by moderate concessions to the Protestants, and had invited Damville to Turin to confer with his new sovereign. Damville came, and then the King tried to persuade his host to allow him to be arrested; but Damville was warned to be on his guard, and, hastily returning to Languedoc, at once formed a closer alliance with the Protestants.

Catherine, with whom were the King of Navarre and Alençon, the Guise brothers, the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the greater part of the Court, was waiting to welcome her son at Bourgoin. The two princes had been set at liberty, by Henri's orders, Catherine having first exacted an oath from them that they would "neither attempt nor originate anything to the detriment of his Majesty the King, and the state of his realm."

The meeting between mother and son was very affectionate; both had obtained the summit of their ambition. After greeting the King, Catherine beckoned Henri of Navarre and *Monsieur*—as Alençon was now called—to approach. "Here," said she, "are two fantastic persons, whom I have had great difficulty in retaining; I hand them over to you! Deal with them as you think fit." His Majesty, at first, received the princes with extreme coldness, and his looks showed plainly the resentment he cherished against them. They, on their side, endeavoured to justify themselves, and warmly protested their devotion. After a while, the King's countenance relaxed, and he embraced the delinquents, exclaiming:—

"Ah well, brothers! you are free. Love me only, and love yourselves enough to reject the pernicious counsels which will be given you to the detriment of my service, and which will end by ruining you."

On September 6, Henri III made his entry into Lyons, where, on All Saints' Day, the three princes communicated publicly at the same Mass, and, before receiving the consecrated wafers, Alençon and Navarre renewed



the oath which they had taken on their liberation, "protesting to the King their fidelity, and swearing, by the place to which they aspired in Paradise, and by the God whom they were about to receive, to be faithful to him and to his State (as they had ever been) to the last drop of their blood." But even the most solemn oaths counted for very little in those days.

The festivities which marked the sojourn of the Court at Lyons were interrupted by two sad events. The first was the death of Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Savoy, sister of Henri II; the second, the untimely end of Marie de Clèves, the young Princesse de Condé, who died in childbed in Paris. Henri III exhibited the most extravagant grief at the death of his mistress, to whom he had written letters from Poland in his own blood. On learning the news, he fell to the ground in a swoon, and was carried to his apartments, which he caused to be draped in black velvet, and where he remained shut up for several days, for the first two of which he refused to touch either food or wine. When he, at length, reappeared, he was clad in the deepest mourning, and the points of his doublet and even the ribbons of his shoes were garnished with little death's-heads.

Shortly afterwards, the Court quitted Lyons for Avignon, under the pretext of affording the grief-stricken King some distraction, but, in reality, with the object of opening negotiations with Damville, Montbrun, and the leaders of the Huguenots of Dauphiné. Here its sojourn was as gloomy as that at Lyons had been pleasant. The sudden death of the Princesse de Condé had occasioned a remarkable change in the humour of Henri III, and whereas, since his arrival in France, he had been the life and soul of every pleasure-party, he now plunged into the most extravagant devotion. He was particularly struck by the proceedings of the Flagellants, a sect very strong in Avignon, who, dressed in sackcloth, nightly paraded the streets of the Papal city by torch-

light, chanting the *Miserere* and scourging one another with whips. Nothing would content him but to become a Flagellant too, and he accordingly enrolled himself in the confraternity of the "*Blancs-Battus*." The Royal Family and the Court were compelled to follow suit; Catherine joined the black penitents; the Cardinals de Lorraine and d'Armagnac, the blue; while *Monsieur* and even Henri of Navarre, who lent himself with marvellous suppleness to all the exigencies of his difficult rôle, might have been seen in these lugubrious processions. The appearance of the mocking little Béarnais in hood and sackcloth proved, however, too much for Henri III's sense of humour, and he could not restrain his laughter.

These ridiculous proceedings had one important result. The Cardinal de Lorraine, unaccustomed to such mortification of the flesh, caught a chill. "The following night," writes L'Estoile, "he had a fever indicative of an extreme malady of the head, occasioned by the night-dew of Avignon which had injured his brain in the procession of the "*Batteurs*," in which he took part crucifix in hand, his feet bare, and with very little covering on his head." His illness was of brief duration. The Cardinal, in his delirium, had in his mouth nothing but obscenities, and even that vile word . . . ; which made the young prelate, his nephew, designated to succeed him in the archbishopric of Rheims, say, laughing, that he saw nothing in his uncle to cause one to despair of his recovery, and that he had all his natural words and actions."

At the end of a few days, however, the cardinal died, to the open joy of all Protestants, and the secret relief of the King and Catherine, who considered themselves well rid of an embarrassing personality. On the day of his death, Avignon was visited by a violent storm, which caused the Huguenots to declare that the cardinal had been carried off by the devil, "since something more violent than the wind tore down and whirled off into

the air the lattices and window-bars of the house where he lodged."

The Cardinal de Lorraine, who was in his fiftieth year, died detested by every one, with the possible exception of his relatives. He was detested by the courtiers, because in the time of his prosperity, "he was very insolent and blind, and showed no consideration for any one; but, in adversity, the most sweet, courteous, and gracious person that one could wish to see," and equally despised by churchmen, who regarded him as "very mischief-making, restless, and ambitious, and a hypocrite in his religion, which he used to promote his own grandeur."<sup>1</sup>

The Cardinal de Lorraine disappeared at a moment when the selection of a new Queen of France had inspired in his family the hope of a return, in some measure at least, of the power which it had enjoyed in the time of François II and Mary Stuart.

Henri III, in fixing his tearful eyes on the portrait of the Princesse de Condé, recollected that he had met a young girl who bore a close resemblance to his deceased innamorata. Two years before, while on his way to Poland, sad at leaving the beautiful princess of whom he was so enamoured and whom he was never to see again, he remarked at Nancy, among the ladies in attendance on the Comtesse de Vaudémont a damsel who appeared to him the living portrait of her from whom he had just separated. He requested Madame de Vaudémont, who appeared to be the mistress of this young girl, to bring her to him; and Madame de Vaudémont was obliged to confess that she was her step-daughter, born of her husband's first wife, Marguerite d'Egmont, and sacrificed to the interest of the children of the second marriage. This princess, overwhelmed by affronts and humiliations in her own family, resigned, pious, had pleased the King of Poland; and now, in the excess of his grief at the death of the Princesse de Condé, he resolved to marry her, as though he imagined that he

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.



DUKE OF ANJOU, AFTERWARDS HENRI III.

From a photograph by A. Giraudon, Paris, after an anonymous drawing in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

a new era of favour, of donations, and of power, they were destined to be disappointed. For the young Queen remained entirely without influence, and it was only by a tearful appeal to the Queen-mother that she was enabled to secure the banishment from Court of her husband's ex-mistress, Renée de Châteauneuf, whom Henri III had, with infamous taste, appointed one of her maids-of-honour, and who had had the effrontery to appear at a ball wearing a toilette precisely similar to that of her royal mistress.

Henri III had gifts which, in a different age and with a different training, might have made of him a shrewd and capable ruler. He could become, when it suited his purpose, almost as fine an "actor of royalty" as Louis XIV was afterwards to show himself; he could speak with weight and dignity, and even with eloquence; he had insight into men and things, and some of his instructions to his Ambassadors at foreign Courts are models of perspicacity and sound reasoning; while, on more than one occasion, as, for example, when he rebuked the arrogant demand of Philip II, that the Prior of Crato, his defeated rival for the Crown of Portugal, should be expelled from France, where he had taken refuge, he displayed a really high sense of his kingly dignity.<sup>1</sup> But the baneful influence of his mother, and the evil influences amidst which he had been brought up, had corrupted his whole nature and left him entirely destitute of moral sense; and his reign is one miserable record of lost opportunities, of abilities neglected or misapplied, of puerile follies, of shameful profligacy, and of devotional excesses scarcely more serious or more decent than his debaucheries, of duplicity, trickery, and senseless extravagance.

The conduct of the King astonished and irritated his

<sup>1</sup> To Philip's demand Henri III replied that "he was not less a king than Philip II, and in no way dependent upon him; that France was the asylum of the unfortunate, and that the Prior of Crato should remain there so long as he pleased."

subjects ; soon he was not only disliked but despised. What could be thought of a sovereign—to mention only his follies—who, when his realm was torn by internal dissensions and hastening towards bankruptcy, could keep his Council waiting for hours, while he dressed his wife's hair or starched her ruffs ; who appeared at a Court ball, his face rouged and powdered, the body of his doublet cut low, like a woman's, with long sleeves falling to the ground, and a string of pearls round his neck, "so that one knew not," writes d'Aubigné, "whether it was a woman-King or a man-Queen" ; who gave audiences to Ambassadors with a basketful of puppies suspended from his neck by a broad silk ribbon ; who might be seen playing Cup-and-Ball with his courtiers in the streets, and who wasted immense sums, borrowed at usurious interest from Italian bankers or wrung from his unhappy people, on balls, fêtes, and masquerades, or in purchasing jewellery and curios at extravagant prices ?

But it was the King's favourites—his odious "*mignons*"—who particularly exasperated the people and ended by transforming their dislike and contempt into hatred and disgust. The original idea of these *mignons* was to counterbalance the power of the great nobles, whom Henri feared and distrusted, by men who should owe their fortune entirely to his favour, and, as such, had something to recommend it. But, though a few of his later favourites, such as d'Épernon and Joyeuse, were men of considerable ability, and rendered the King good service, the majority of the earlier ones, chosen for their good looks, their elegance, and their personal courage, were men of evil lives, who disgusted all classes by their insolence, violence, and debauchery. "From 1576 their name of *mignons*," says L'Estoile, "began to be heard in the mouths of the people, to whom they were very odious, both on account of their way of behaving and their effeminate and immodest dress ; but, above all, because of the immense gifts and favours



lavished upon them by the King, which the people held to be the cause of their ruin. . . . These fine *mignons* wore their hair long, curled and frizzled, under little velvet caps, as is the custom of the courtesans, and their ruffs starched and half a foot wide, so that when one beheld the head above the ruff, it resembled the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger. . . . Their practices were gambling, blasphemy, dancing, quarrelling, and wenching, and following the King wherever he went."

The Duc d'Alençon—*Monsieur* as he was now called—had his favourites also, and quarrels between them and those of the King were of frequent occurrence. Henri III had good reasons for disliking and distrusting Alençon, who was false, perfidious, greedy, and ambitious, and who, he was well aware, was in constant communication with Damville, La Noue, and all his enemies, both within and without the kingdom. He revenged himself, as the other was plotting, basely, and caused him to be insulted by his favourites. One of them, Du Guast, of whom we have spoken elsewhere, declared that if the King were to order him to kill the duke, he would not hesitate to obey him. *Monsieur* had enticed from the royal band the bravest of the gentlemen and also the most violent, that Bussy d'Amboise immortalised by Dumas *père* in his *Dame de Montsoreau*. Henri III, furious at the defection of Bussy, instructed Du Guast to put him out of the way. Du Guast, aware that he would stand but a poor chance with so doughty a champion, had recourse to an ambuscade, and posted one night a number of the King's guards, of whom he was colonel, in a street through which Bussy must pass, on his way from the Louvre to his lodging in the Rue de Grenelle. Bussy was, for the time being, *hors de combat*, suffering from a wound in the sword-arm, which he had received in a duel with Saint-Phal, another of the King's *mignons*. But his attendants put up a gallant fight; and though one of them, who happened

to be also carrying his arm in a sling and was mistaken for his master in the darkness, fell covered with wounds, he himself escaped unhurt by slipping through a door, which, by good fortune, had been left ajar, and closing it in the face of his adversaries.

Next morning, *Monsieur* demanded reparation for the affront which he considered had been offered him, "in seeking to deprive him of as valiant and worthy a servant as ever prince of his quality had known." The King, however, was equally determined to protect the offenders, and, urged on by Du Guast, declared that Bussy had brought all the trouble upon himself by his overbearing and quarrelsome behaviour, and swore that he would no longer tolerate such a ruffianly brawler at his Court. In the end, Catherine, fearing an open rupture between her sons, persuaded Alençon to advise his favourite to withdraw for a while from Paris and the Court; and Bussy retired to his government of Anjou.

The ladies took sides, and the King provoked them to do so. As spiteful as he was corrupt, he made game of their frailties, and did not even spare those of his nearest relatives. He divulged the amours of his sister Marguerite and denounced them to Catherine, and strove to pique the vanity of the King of Navarre and make him ashamed of his indifference to his wife's conduct. Marguerite, exasperated, warmly espoused the side of Alençon, and would have enrolled her husband in the same cause, if the beautiful Charlotte de Beaune, Dame de Sauve, one of the most bewitching members of Catherine's "*escadron volant*," who served the King's party, had not held him captive. This siren likewise admitted Alençon to her favours, and employed all her wiles to excite Navarre and *Monsieur* to jealousy of one another, with the object of preventing any concerted action between them in the political arena. She succeeded but too well, and soon they were in open and declared rivalry. "Forgetful of every other ambition,

duty, and object in life, the sole idea in their minds seemed to be the pursuit of this woman.”<sup>1</sup>

Amid the discords which rent the Royal Family, while the King was openly at variance with his brother and sister, and even Catherine's skilful management could not keep the peace, the Duc de Guise busied himself in quietly strengthening his own position by gaining adherents from all classes, “hoping,” writes Marguerite de Valois, “that when the vessel was broken, he might pick up the bits.” Following the traditions of his family, he courted the Parisians most assiduously, and particularly the mob, for, though he secretly despised them, he had seen in the St. Bartholomew how potent a factor in politics these emotional masses were, once their passions were aroused, and he was resolved, if ever he required them, to have them under his hand. He accordingly neglected nothing to increase his already immense popularity in the capital, standing sponsor to children innumerable, dining at the humblest tables, giving his personal attention to every request for assistance that reached him, pausing to chat as he passed through the streets with the merchant at his shop-door or with the artisan at his toil. No candidate for a democratic constituency was ever at more pains to gain the good-will of the electorate than was this most haughty of princes that of the Parisians.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Marguerite de Valois.*

## CHAPTER XXVII

Unenviable position of Henri of Navarre and Alençon at the Court—Flight of *Monsieur*—His proclamation—The Queen-mother leaves Paris to negotiate with him—The *Politiques* and Huguenots assume the offensive—Guise defeats Thoré's Germans at Dormans—He is wounded in the face and receives, in consequence, his father's *sobriquet* of "*le Balafré*."—His enthusiastic reception in Paris—Truce of Champigny—Assassination of Henri III's favourite Du Guast by the Baron de Viteaux and the brothers Boucicaut—Escape of the King of Navarre—Peace of Beaulieu ("*Peace of Monsieur*")—Indignation which it arouses in the ultra-Catholic party—Formation of the League and beginning of the struggle between the Valois and the Guises—Progress of the new association—Stormy interview between the Queen-mother and Guise—The mission of the advocate Jean David to Rome—His audience of Gregory XIII—He dies on his return journey, and his baggage falls into the hands of the Protestants—Sensation aroused by the publication of a *résumé* of the documents supposed to have been found amongst it—Henri III, in order to rehabilitate himself in Catholic opinion and checkmate the Guises, places himself at the head of the League—Impolicy of this step.

MEANTIME, the position of Henri of Navarre and Alençon at the Court had become even more irksome than in the preceding reign. Although nominally at liberty, they were still subjected to the closest and most vexatious surveillance. Navarre saw his hereditary States a prey to disorder, his authority declining, and his orders ignored by his subjects, who appeared to consider themselves absolved from obedience to a ruler who was little better than a prisoner. From his kingdom he received scarcely anything; while his other fiefs, ravaged by war, brought him but a meagre revenue, and his applications for his own and his wife's pensions were met by specious excuses or mortifying refusals.

*Monsieur* was in no better case. The revenues of his appanage were insufficient to enable him to maintain the dignity of his position, and he was deeply in debt.

His brother treated him with coldness and contempt; while his friends found themselves threatened with disgrace and were continually having quarrels thrust upon them by the insolent favourites of the King.

Under stress of their common grievances, the two princes agreed to forget their differences, and resumed their projects of escape. This time, success rewarded the efforts of Alençon's friends, and on September 15, 1575, *Monsieur* succeeded in effecting his escape, and made his way to Dreux, one of the towns of his appanage, which had been chosen as the rendezvous of his partisans.

From Dreux, Alençon issued a proclamation, "based" remarked L'Estoile, "as they all are, on the preservation and re-establishment of the laws and statutes of the realm," which greatly perturbed the King and the Court. The Queen-mother volunteered to endeavour to persuade the fugitive to return, and on September 21 she left Paris, accompanied by the Cardinal de Bourbon and the Bishop of Meudon. But Alençon, warned that Nevers and Matignon were preparing to take the field against him, did not await her arrival, but withdrew into Touraine; and it was not until October 5 that Catherine contrived to overtake him. The prince, however, refused to negotiate until the two marshals, Montmorency and Cossé, who were still in the Bastille, had been released; and Henri III was obliged to set them at liberty and beg them to use their influence in favour of peace.

Both the King and Catherine were thoroughly alarmed at the course which events were taking, for the escape of *Monsieur* had been the signal for the *Politiques* and Huguenots to commence a vigorously offensive warfare. Thoré, the youngest of the Montmorency brothers, had advanced into Champagne at the head of 5,000 Germans, who were only the advance-guard of a large force of the dreaded *reiters* which for some time past Condé had been employed in raising; Damville, in Languedoc, was preparing to support Alençon with 14,000 men;

while John Casimir, brother of the Elector Palatine, was threatening the Three Bishoprics.

Guise, prompt to seize the occasion to prove himself the champion of the Parisians, chose the enemy the most dangerous for the capital, and demanded and obtained permission to march against Thoré's Germans. He advanced into Champagne, and came in sight of them at Dormans, near Château-Thierry, at the moment when they were crossing the Marne with their baggage. Although the main body of the Royal army was more than half a league in the rear, and the duke had only with him a weak advance-guard, consisting of three *compagnies d'ordonnance*—that is to say, 200 men-at-arms and the same number of mounted arquebusiers—he did not hesitate to attack. Ordering the arquebusiers to dismount and open fire on the enemy, he crossed the river at a point lower down, and, with his 200 men-at-arms, charged the Germans in flank, as they were emerging from a wood. In the charge, the duke was badly wounded by a pistol-shot fired close to his face, which carried away "a great part of his left cheek and ear"; and his followers, discouraged by their leader's mishap, were beginning to give way, when the Maréchal de Biron came up with the rest of the cavalry, upon which those of the Germans who did not take to flight promptly surrendered. "They are a nation very easy to beat," wrote the younger Tavannes.

Guise was carried to the French camp on a stretcher hastily improvised from branches cut from the trees in the wood, and thence conveyed to Épernay. Here he remained for some weeks, suffering cruelly from his wound, and scarcely able to speak, but proud of having earned the right to his father's glorious *sobriquet* of "*le Balafre*." For by this he was to be henceforth known to the Parisians, eager to revive the legend of the Ducs de Guise. Like Claude and François de Lorraine, Henri de Lorraine had driven back the enemy from the walls of Paris, and Paris, which Thoré, as a matter of



fact, had never dreamed of attacking, hailed him as its saviour. When he showed himself once more in the capital, pale and smiling, with the long scar on his cheek, he was greeted with boundless enthusiasm. It was murmured by those who did not trust the Lorraine princes that that scar was likely to cost France very dear indeed.

The action at Dormans had neither importance nor results. Two thousand *reiters* had been put to flight or made prisoners; but the remainder of the Germans whom Thoré was bringing into France crossed the Marne and advanced to the Loire without encountering any resistance, thanks to the impression which prevailed that Guise had destroyed all the invaders. In fact, by exaggerating the duke's victory, the fruits of it were lost; to make his glory complete, his friends refused to believe that there were any *reiters* left, and the bulk of them were thus enabled to effect their junction with their French allies. In November, Henri III was glad to purchase a truce of six months at Champigny, by surrendering to his rebellious brother the towns of Angoulême, Niort, Saumur, Bourges, and La Charité, as pledges of his good faith, and in according the Protestants the free exercise of their religion in all the places which they occupied, and in two other towns in each government.

Three weeks previously, Henri had lost his favourite, Du Guast, who was assassinated by Guillaume du Prat, Baron de Viteaux, a notorious *bretteur*, whom Du Guast had caused to be disgraced and exiled, assisted by two brothers of the name of Boucicaux, in a house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. This house adjoined and communicated with that of Du Guast's mistress, Madame d'Estrées, and had been rented by him with the object of facilitating his intercourse with his inamorata; and, after despatching the King's favourite, Viteaux passed into Madame d'Estrées' house, and, with revolting cruelty, wiped his sword, wet with the blood of her lover, upon

the distracted woman's dress. Then, since it was midnight and the gates were closed, he and his accomplices made for the city walls, down which they lowered themselves with ropes, mounted horses which were awaiting them, and escaped to the army of Alençon.

Early in the following year, the King suffered another vexation. On February 4, 1576, Henri of Navarre, who had been impatiently awaiting an opportunity of following *Monsieur's* example, succeeded in effecting his escape also, and made his way to Saumur, on the Loire, where he lost no time in announcing his return to the Reformed faith. The truce of Champigny, which had stipulated for the suspension of hostilities for six months, scarcely lasted as many weeks, and, with the restoration to the Protestants of their natural chief, the coalition became more formidable than ever. Condé and John Casimir, at the head of a formidable army of *reiters*, invaded Burgundy, took Dijon, crossed the Loire near La Charité, and effected a junction with the forces of Alençon in the Bourbonnais. In Gascony, several important places had fallen into the hands of the Huguenots; and while "the bravest and most chivalrous in France"<sup>1</sup> flocked to Alençon's standard, the Royal troops were half-hearted and mutinous, and many of the nobles flatly refused to march against *Monsieur*, "dreading," observes the Queen of Navarre, "to get their fingers pinched between two stones."

In these circumstances, Henri III had no alternative but to make overtures to his rebellious brother, and Catherine, assisted by her daughter, the Queen of Navarre, who had great influence over Alençon, was entrusted with the task of conducting the negotiations. The terms, which were finally agreed upon at the Château of Beaulieu, near Loches (May 6, 1576), were a complete triumph for the rebels and clearly prove the desperate straits to which the insurrection had reduced Henri III. The Protestants secured greater concessions than any

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Marguerite de Valois.*

which they had hitherto obtained. They were granted complete freedom of worship throughout the kingdom, except in Paris; the establishment of courts in all the Parliaments composed of an equal number of judges of both religions, and restoration to all their honours and offices, while the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was formally disavowed, and the property of Coligny and other prominent victims restored to their heirs,<sup>1</sup> and eight fortresses handed over to them, as security for the due observance of the treaty. Alençon received the addition to his appanage of Anjou, Berry, Touraine and Maine, and other lordships, which raised his revenue to 400,000 écus. He now assumed the title of Duc d'Anjou, which had been that of Henri III before his accession to the throne, and by which we must henceforth refer to him. Henri of Navarre was confirmed in his government of Guienne and Condé in that of Picardy. Finally, a large sum was paid to John Casimir for the wages of his *reiters* and to compensate him for the trouble and expense of his invasion of France, besides which he was granted an annual pension of 40,000 livres, in order to secure his friendship.

The Peace of Beaulieu—the “Peace of *Monsieur*” it was called—was the fifth in thirteen years. It aroused, like its predecessors, the indignation of the Catholics and the contempt of all honest men, in stipulating merely concessions to the Huguenots, up to then continually conquered, and in conferring on the rebels all the advantages which would have sufficed to prevent war; but with the secret thought of not paying any attention in practice to engagements thus contracted, and of despoiling the Protestants, so soon as they had laid down their arms, of the rights with which they believed themselves invested. It was the old game. Catherine did not condescend to change her tactics, believing

<sup>1</sup> The execution of Montgomery was also declared to be a miscarriage of justice, and, on the demand of Alençon, that of La Môle and Ciconnas as well.

that parties are sufficiently forgetful to be constantly the dupes of the same frauds and the victims of the same faults. The Huguenots were once more deceived, but the Catholics refused any longer to play a part in the periodical comedy of the civil wars. Catherine had, in fact, altogether omitted to calculate the moral effect produced upon the country by this revelation of cowardice. The negotiators of the Peace, on their return to Paris, were greeted by a cry of popular indignation. The Parlement refused to register the Edict, and the King had to hold a Bed of Justice to force that body to confirm it. The clergy of Notre Dame declined to allow the cathedral choir to sing the *Te Deum*, which was eventually chanted by the choristers of Henri III's private chapel, in the presence of only those officials of the Court, the municipality, and the Parlement whose duties obliged them to be present. The illuminations at the Hôtel de Ville were witnessed by a mere handful of spectators, and the reading of the Edict in the courtyard of the Louvre was listened to in sullen silence, broken here and there by angry murmurs.

The masses did not yet go so far as to accuse the King of indifference to the Catholic religion, but they were obliged to admit his impotence to enforce it. Several times it had been proved that the military forces and the finances of the Crown could with difficulty counter-balance the great resources which an energetic party derived from the rapid mobilisation of its adherents, the gratuitous service of the nobility, the sequestration and collection of ecclesiastical property, the pillage and contributions of war. The idea spread that the Catholics ought also to organise themselves into an association to remedy the weakness of the royal authority.

The idea was not a new one. Already, in the time of Charles IX, as we have mentioned elsewhere, several leagues and armed fraternities for the defence of the Catholic faith had been formed. These had been but

local and temporary ; but now a new union was set on foot, upon a wider basis and with more serious aims.

The "Peace of *Monsieur*" had restored to the Prince de Condé the government of Picardy and ceded to him Péronne as a place of surety. But Jacques d'Humières, the Governor of Péronne, a friend of the Guises and a bitter enemy of the Montmorencies, refused to deliver that fortress to Condé when he demanded to be placed in possession of it, and with "the prelates, seigneurs, soldiers, and inhabitants," of the town and neighbourhood formed a "Holy Union" and appealed to "all the princes, seigneurs, and prelates" of the whole kingdom for support.

Although the founders of the League of Péronne intended it to be, not only the nucleus of a great French league, but also, if the need should arise, of an international one, it is improbable that it would have had any further extension than the other provincial associations, if the calculations of Henri III and the ambition of the House of Lorraine had not worked to extend it to the whole of France.

Up to the time of the Peace of Beaulieu, Guise would appear to have been still a loyal subject of the Crown, and still worthy to be regarded as a national hero. But the idolatrous acclamations which had greeted him when he returned to Paris, after his recovery from the wound he had received at Dormans, and showed himself for the first time with the scar on his cheek, appear to have turned his head ; and his vanity was deeply wounded when peace was soon afterwards concluded, notwithstanding the most strenuous opposition on his part. He chose to consider that he had been betrayed by the King and despoiled of success in the midst of victory, from an unworthy fear lest fresh triumphs should still further increase his already immense popularity ; and when he saw the indignation which the concessions to the Huguenots had aroused amongst his co-religionists, particularly in Paris, he judged that the time had arrived

for him to abandon even the simulation of a good understanding with the Court. From that moment, the struggle between the Valois and the Guises, with nothing less than the Crown of France as the stake, may be said to begin.

The idea of an association of all French Catholics in defence of their religion had been received with enthusiasm by the fanatical population of Paris, and, counselled in all probability by their leaders, the perfumer, Pierre de la Bruyère, and the advocate, Jean David, Guise forthwith resolved to place himself at the head of the movement, and caused a declaration to be drawn up and circulated throughout the kingdom. It is this declaration which is regarded as the constitutive act of the League.

In the name of the Holy Trinity, the association of princes, seigneurs, and Catholic gentlemen proposed "to restore the law of God in its entirety," and maintain the Roman Catholic religion; to preserve Henri III and his Very Christian successors in the state, authority, and obedience due to them from their subjects, as should be set forth at the next meeting of the States-General, which was to assemble at Blois at the end of the year, and to restore to the nation its ancient rights and liberties—such as they were in the days of Clovis.

The secret articles of the association followed: Each member vowed to sacrifice goods and life in the cause of the Holy Union and to oppose any contrary enterprise from whomsoever it might proceed. The wrong done to any member was to be avenged, if necessary, by force, no matter who the offender might be. And a chief was to be chosen to whom all might swear obedience, and to him alone the right of awarding penalties was committed. All Catholics were to be summoned secretly to join the Union, and to furnish arms and men for the execution of its objects, according to their ability, and those who refused were to be accounted its enemies, and to be "attacked and molested in every way"; and

should any member attempt to leave the Union, on any pretext whatsoever, he was to be punished with the extremest rigour, as "an enemy of God, a rebel, and a disturber of the public peace."

The oath which each member was required to take was as follows :

"I swear to God the Creator, with my hand on the Gospel, and on pain of anathematisation and eternal damnation, that I have entered this holy Catholic association according to the formula of the treaty which has been read to me, loyally and sincerely, whether to command or to obey ; and I promise, on my life and honour, to adhere to it to the last drop of my blood, without violating or withdrawing from it, on account of *any command*, pretext, excuse, or occasion whatsoever."

It has been stated that the organisation of the Protestant Churches suggested that of the League, but a glance at these articles will show how widely the Holy Union diverged from its model. The Huguenot confederation was intensely democratic in character, and was organised mainly for defence ; whereas the League was a despotism of the most pronounced type, and was organised for attack, refusing to recognise even a benevolent neutrality, and declaring most emphatically that every one who was not for it was against it.

The new society spread rapidly, owing in great measure to the activity of the Jesuits, who worked for it with untiring zeal. The Duc de Guise recruited adherents throughout all the kingdom, and he and his followers took particular pains to gain Paris. The perfumer, Pierre de la Bruyère, and his son Mathieu, counsellor to the Châtelet, went about among the mercantile classes with lists for signature, and appear to have been very successful, while the Président Hannequin undertook a similar mission in the parliamentary world. But the First President, De Thou, dissuaded his colleagues from signing the formula of the League ; and the propaganda,



in consequence, made comparatively little progress amongst the magistracy.

Meanwhile, the movement had been brought to the notice of the King, but at first it does not seem to have aroused in Henri III any feeling save a vague uneasiness. On August 2, L'Estoile tells us, his Majesty, "having heard of a secret league and confederation, privately set on foot to prevent by all means the execution of the Edict of Pacification," sent for the Ducs de Guise, Mayenne and Nemours, "being informed that these three noblemen were suspected of being the chiefs of this League," and desired them to sign and swear to the strict observation of the Edict. This they did readily enough—for the most solemn oaths appear to have sat very lightly upon people's consciences in those days—after which the King troubled himself very little about the great confederation which was one day to shake his throne to its very foundations, and plunged with renewed zest into his puerile amusements and extravagant follies, "as though his State had been the most peaceable in the world."

Catherine was more disquieted, and in July the English Ambassador, Dale, reports "a great brawl" between her and the Duc de Guise. The duke, it appears, was talking with a gentleman of Picardy in the King's antechamber, when their conversation, which must have been one of some importance, since it had already lasted nearly two hours, was suddenly interrupted by the Queen-mother, who "asked them whereof they talked so long, charging the duke that he would never leave to trouble the peace of the realm, and called him into the King's cabinet and there began afresh." The duke, the Ambassador continues, was "very malapert with her, and said he was able to hold up his head against all men, and had never done anything save for the King's service."

Shortly before the meeting of the Estates, which were to assemble at Blois at the beginning of December 1576,

an incident occurred which gave Henri III food for very serious reflection, and caused him to regard the League in a different light.

In the previous July, the advocate Jean David, one of the leaders of the movement in Paris, had made a journey to Rome, in the train of Pierre de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, who was proceeding thither in order to obtain from the Holy See permission for the King to alienate the goods of the French clergy. The object of David's journey was to sound Gregory XIII as to the attitude he intended to assume towards the League, and, though it is improbable that he was actually sent by Guise, there can be little doubt that the duke knew and approved of his mission. Any way, David was very cordially received by the Cardinal de Pellevé, the agent of the Guises at Rome, and, through the good offices of the cardinal, he was accorded a very favourable hearing by Gregory XIII, "a personage whose candour and integrity were marvellous, but who, from the natural kindness of his nature, allowed himself to be easily persuaded that this League breathed nothing except faith, religion, and charity, zeal for the public welfare, and the correction and reformation of abuses."<sup>1</sup>

What exactly passed between the credulous Pontiff, the intriguing advocate, and the factious prelate we do not know; but it is probable that Gregory received David very amiably and, while refusing to commit himself, did not discourage him, intending to make use of him according to the course of future events. But what is certain, is that, on his return journey, David fell ill and died; that, by accident, his baggage fell into the hands of the Protestants, and that, shortly afterwards, the latter published at Lyons a sensational *résumé* of the documents which, they asserted, had been found amongst it.

According to this publication, which, owing to its origin, must of necessity be regarded with considerable

<sup>1</sup> Davila, *Guerres civiles*.

suspicion, the Holy See had adopted the project of the overthrow of the Valois and that of the elevation of the Guises in their place; it had accepted the fantastic genealogy which the deceased advocate had propounded, concluding that "the race of Capet, although it had succeeded to the temporal administration of the realm of Charlemagne, had not succeeded to the Apostolic benediction bestowed upon the posterity of the said Charlemagne"; that it was plainly "altogether destitute of moral principle, some of them stricken by the spirit of madness, persons stupid and of no account, others reprobated by God and man for heresy, proscribed and rejected by the Holy Ecclesiastical Communion"; that the offshoots of Charlemagne were, on the other hand, "flourishing, lovers of virtue, full of vigour in mind and body to execute high and praiseworthy things." The Holy See had approved, too, of the plan of the conspiracy, which was to stir up the people, deprive the King of all power and make him the creature of the League, assemble the States-General, summon Navarre and Condé to it and intimidate these princes, obtain from the Estates the title of Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom for the Duc de Guise, then reduce the Huguenot strongholds and exterminate those Protestants who refused to abjure their faith, and, finally, shut Henri III up in a monastery, as Pepin did Chilperic.

The sensation caused by the publication of this document was very great. The Guises made haste to disavow David, and declared, by the pens of their partisans, that the whole thing was apocryphal and "the work of Protestant industry." But from Madrid came the proof, if not of the complete veracity of the Huguenot libel, at least of the existence of a little fire behind the smoke. The French Ambassador, Jean de Vivonne, Seigneur de Saint-Gouard, succeeded in procuring a copy of the memorial which the Vatican had despatched to Philip II, to acquaint that prince with David's nego-

tiations, and transmitted it to Henri III.<sup>1</sup> The King, who had not attached any importance to the document published at Lyons, regarding it as a Huguenot fabrication, became seriously alarmed at the revelations of his Ambassador. If he had wished it, there would still have been time to crush the League. But, after consultation with his favourite Villequier, he decided that it would be better policy to rehabilitate himself in Catholic opinion and supplant Guise by accepting the League and declaring himself its chief. He therefore announced that he not only approved of the new association which had been formed for the defence of the Church, but that he had resolved to manifest his zeal in the good cause by placing himself at its head. He then signed the articles of the Holy Union, in a modified form, made the Court follow his example, and sent instructions to the governors of provinces to obtain as many signatures as possible.

This decision, bold in appearance, was in reality only weakness, and was disapproved by his wisest counsellors. In insinuating himself into the armour of his rival, the Valois sank still further in public estimation. This new oscillation of his policy seemed a sign the more of his versatile character, and, at the same time, of his distress.

“It is no doubt prudent,” observes Forneron, “to know how to manœuvre between two adversaries too powerful, in such a way as to aid them and to combat their attacks. But these manœuvres are not permissible, save for the purpose of lending strength to the party that one has momentarily adopted, never to borrow strength from it. When Catherine, with the resources of her genius, her captains, her maids-of-honour, and her prestige, favoured or attacked the Guises, she understood how to present herself to them as a precious ally or a dangerous enemy. Henri III, on the contrary,

<sup>1</sup> De Thou, *Histoire*; Vicomte Guy de Brémond d'Ars, *le Père de Madame de Rambouillet, Jean de Vivonne: sa vie et ses ambassades* (Paris, 1886).

was only capable of oscillating from one party to the other, without enfeebling those whom he combated, without being useful to those whom he joined. In place of bringing a reinforcement, he demanded a support. It was no longer policy; it was distress. He did not even succeed in making people fear his intrigues; he was only able to make them despise his versatility. At the moment of the Peace of Beaulieu, one had seen him devoted to his brother, and ready to carry the war into Flanders. A few months later, he assumed the direction of the League, at the moment when the League was already complete without the King, against the King. It was neither to its advantage to receive his advances, nor to its interest to lend him its authority. Its real chief was no longer even the Duc de Guise; it was already Philip, who was insinuating himself as protector and provider of subsidies.”<sup>1</sup>

The selfish and treacherous Anjou went even further than his brother. Having obtained, by the Peace of Beaulieu, all that he desired, he had been at little pains to conceal his dislike of his Protestant allies, and now deserted them without the smallest compunction, not only signing the roll of the League immediately after the King, but actually soliciting the command of one of the armies which would operate against the Huguenots when hostilities were resumed. Thus, the Valois found themselves captives in the party of the Guises; they became the instruments of the ambition of their subjects, and, though conscious of the necessity of peace, were forced to reawaken the civil war.

<sup>1</sup> *Les Ducs de Guise et leur époque.*



## CHAPTER XXVIII

Success of the League in the elections to the States-General—The vote of the Estates in favour of religious unity followed by the revolt of the Huguenots—The war in Berry and Auvergne—Guise saves the garrison of La Charité from being massacred—And honourably distinguishes himself by his efforts to restrain the barbarity of the Catholic army at the taking of Issoire—Success of the Duc de Mayenne in the West—His challenge to a duel refused by the Prince de Condé—Peace of Bergerac—Growing unpopularity of Henri III—Murder of the Comtesse de Villequier by her husband—The *mignons* and *Monsieur*—Flight of the latter from the Court—The Duel of the *Mignons*—Extravagant grief of Henri III at the death of his favourites—At the instigation of the King, the Comte de Saint-Mesgrin endeavours to compromise the reputation of the Duchesse de Guise—Conversation between Guise and Bassompierre—Assassination of Saint-Mesgrin—*Monsieur's* Flemish enterprise—Financial embarrassments of the Duc de Guise—Guise and Don Juan of Austria—Their interview at Joinville—Their projects—Death of Don Juan—Guise becomes a pensioner of Philip II—His conduct considered—His plans for an invasion of England discouraged by Philip, who purposes to use the duke to create trouble in France—Guise and the Court—Elevation of d'Épernon and Joyeuse.

THE League, aided by the whole influence of the Court, had exerted itself to the utmost to terrorise the elections to the States-General, and the Huguenots and *Politiques*, seeing how matters were going, had held aloof, with the result that, when the Estates met, they were practically unrepresented.<sup>1</sup> Anticipating that measures fatal to their interests would be passed, they wished to leave no pretext for describing the States-General of Blois as a full and free meeting of the representatives of the nation.<sup>2</sup> In acting thus, they undoubtedly com-

<sup>1</sup> Only one Protestant deputy presented himself: the Sieur de Mirambeau, elected by the noblesse of Saintonge.

<sup>2</sup> A. T. Willert, *Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots in France*, p. 126. But, according to other authorities, the principal motive of the Huguenots' abstention was the fear of revealing their numerical weakness.

mitted a grave error, since, notwithstanding their abstention and the terrorism of the League, it was only after long and acrimonious debates, and by a bare majority, that the Third Estate voted in favour of the reception of the Edict, and of depriving the Protestants of all exercise of their religion, both in public and private. But, to wage war effectively, money was required, and, as the Estates absolutely refused to sanction any further alienation of the Crown lands, or, indeed, any other expedient for raising supplies, their vote was rendered valueless. Accordingly, they were dismissed by the King, who reproached them bitterly with their parsimony, but was probably not ill pleased at the check which the League had sustained.

Meanwhile, hostilities had begun. The vote of the Estates in favour of religious unity was interpreted by the Huguenots as an informal declaration of war, and they at once rose in arms, and began seizing whatever places they could lay their hands on in Poitou, Languedoc, and Dauphiné. Although the Estates had refused to vote a sol towards the 2,000,000 crowns at which the King had estimated the cost of the war, two small armies were raised, one of which was entrusted to Anjou, with Nevers, Guise, and his cousin Aumale as his lieutenants, the other to Mayenne. The former operated in Berry and Auvergne, the latter in Poitou. Anjou's campaign was a short one, and signalised chiefly by the taking of the two towns of La Charité and Issoire, two of the places of surety which had been surrendered to the Huguenots. The garrison of La Charité capitulated, on condition that their lives should be spared; nevertheless, they would have been massacred, had not Guise exerted his authority to secure the observance of the terms of the capitulation.

From La Charité the Catholic army marched upon Issoire, which offered a more stubborn resistance. However, after a siege of some days, during which Guise, disdaining to put on his armour, headed an unsuccessful



assault upon the town, in which many of his followers were killed, the garrison demanded a capitulation. While the terms were being discussed, the Catholic soldiery broke into the town, and "could not be restrained until they had pillaged and burnt the town and inhumanly slain all whom they met."<sup>1</sup> It was one of the most cruel sacks in all those cruel wars. The majority of the women and girls were first outraged and then butchered, and few even of the children were spared. Guise distinguished himself very honourably by his efforts to restrain the atrocious barbarity of the soldiery; he killed with his own hand a soldier whom he saw maltreating a girl; filled his tent with women who had fled from the burning town, and was seen carrying little children before him across the ford of the river to place them in safety on the other side.

The soldiers became more ferocious as the campaign proceeded. At Saint-Lô both the men and the women were put to the sword, while at Fontenay-le-Comte, treacherously surprised as Issoire had been in the midst of a parley, "murders, sack, and outrages on women rendered this poor town desolate." The open towns were no better treated, particularly after the departure of Guise, who had apparently quitted the army in disgust, had deprived the troops of the little discipline which existed amongst them; and the wretched Anjou, without influence over the soldiers and without pity for the vanquished, found himself assisting at scenes of disgraceful brigandage.

Mayenne, meanwhile, was carrying all before him in the West. He took Brouage, and drove Condé to take refuge in La Rochelle; and was so elated by his success that he sent that prince a challenge to single combat, to which Condé replied that, "according to the maxims universally accepted amongst gentlemen, combats of the kind proposed could only take place between equals, and he must therefore be permitted to remind the duke

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

of the distance which the accident of birth had placed between them."

In the South, the defection of Damville, who had quarrelled with the Huguenots and led many of the malcontents into the royal camp, weakened the cause of the Reformers very considerably. But his example was by no means generally followed by the Catholics of his party, nor even by his own relatives; and his brother Thoré and his cousin Châtillon were on the point of attacking him under the walls of Montpellier, when news arrived that peace had been concluded.

The King, in fact, alarmed by the victories won in his name, and foreseeing that, if the Protestants were reduced to impotence, he would find himself left to contend alone against the Guises, than which no prospect could be more terrifying, had, without consulting his nominal allies, offered the Huguenots a new edict (Peace of Bergerac, September 17, 1577), which placed them very much where they stood on the eve of the St. Bartholomew. The most significant clause in this treaty was one which declared that "all leagues, associations and confraternities made or to be made, under whatever pretext, to the prejudice of our present edict, are hereby annulled, and our subjects expressly forbidden to collect money, enrol troops, or raise fortifications, under pain of rigorous punishment."

The Peace of Bergerac, which appears to have been meant honestly enough by the King and was gladly received by moderate men of both parties, was very far from bringing order and repose to France. The Catholic and Protestant confederations were only nominally dissolved, the Huguenots refusing to evacuate their strongholds until the execution of the new edict was fully assured, and the lieutenants of the King endeavouring to surprise these places; while the bands of brigands, the majority of whom sheltered themselves under the Reform banner, and whom the Protestant chiefs did

not dare to disavow altogether, continued to plunder the country from their fastnesses in the mountains of Auvergne, the Cevennes and Dauphiné.

The King, meanwhile, had returned to Paris, where he found himself more unpopular than ever. Although he had not been four years on the throne, he had contrived to estrange all classes of his subjects. The nobles would not submit to the unbridled insolence of the King's favourites, and many of them left the Court in disgust; the clergy resented the concessions made to the Huguenots and the sight "of soldiers, children, and even women enjoying the revenues of bishoprics and abbeys."<sup>1</sup> The middle and lower classes were exasperated by the knowledge that the money wrung from them by taxation or raised by the shameful sale of public offices was being squandered upon foolish or indecent pastimes and upon the worthless *mignons* with whom the King surrounded himself.

For some time after the sword of Viteaux had cut short the ascendancy of Du Guast, René de Villequier, who had been appointed Governor of Paris and of the Île de France, had been the chief favourite and counsellor of the King, and it was he who had persuaded him to place himself at the head of the League, instead of openly combating the ambition of Guise. He was a man of some ability, but of infamous life and of ferocious passions. Henri III took a malicious pleasure in awakening the jealousy of those about him and in slandering their wives and daughters; he rallied Villequier on the little affection which his wife showed him, and accused the unfortunate woman of a secret passion for a M. de Barbisy. One morning, while the Court was at Poitiers, the King pushed his pleasantries so far that Villequier, beside himself with rage and humiliation at thus being publicly ridiculed, left the royal chamber, made his way to his wife's apartments, where he found her dressing

<sup>1</sup> Busbecq to the Emperor, *Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France*, vol. x., cited by H. G. Macdowall, "*Henry of Guise and other Portraits*."

her hair before a mirror, which one of her waiting-women was holding, and stabbed both mistress and maid to death with his poniard. Then, returning calmly to the King, he confessed his crime and asked pardon for it. The courtiers, believing that it was but a gruesome jest, hurried to the countess's apartments, and found the two dead bodies on the floor. Villequier was obliged to leave the Court for a time, not so much, it would seem, for having brutally murdered two women—one of them pregnant—but because he had committed an act of violence in the King's lodging. At the end of some months, however, he received his pardon and recovered the favour of the King, though he was now compelled to share it with a band of young nobles, who had profited by his absence to insinuate themselves into his Majesty's good graces, and who were receiving the most extravagant proofs of his friendship.

The women, constantly calumniated and defamed by Henri III, cruelly avenged themselves by attaching to his name an infamous souvenir; and the gossip of the Court and the satires and pamphlets which were so abundantly launched against this unpopular monarch have so firmly established this odious reputation, that it would seem almost useless to attempt to rehabilitate him. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that no serious document, no memoirs of important contemporaries, serve to incriminate the King, and that the favour of the *mignons*, which, besides, only lasted a few months, is very capable of explanation.

At the time of the Peace of Beaulieu, the King, no longer feeling himself in safety in the midst of his guards against the possible insults of the Duc de Guise, surrounded by gentlemen always ready to draw their swords on the smallest provocation, decided to have some gentlemen *bretteurs* of his own. They were chosen for their good looks, their elegance, their personal courage, and their skill in fencing, and, in return for the favours with which they were loaded, held themselves

always at their royal master's call, and were ready to hazard their lives at any moment in mortal combat against the partisans of Guise.

These brave, but presumptuous and licentious young men, the chief of whom were Grammont, Caylus, Saint-Luc, Maugiron, d'Arcq and Saint-Mesgrin, disgusted all classes by their insolence, violence, and debauchery. Their licence, their arrogance, knew no bounds. The Queen-mother was unable to defend against them either her political influence or her maids-of-honour. *Monsieur* was so grossly insulted by them in public that his life became a burden to him, and, after his request to be allowed to retire from Court for a time had been answered by his being put under arrest in his apartments, made his escape from the Louvre one night, with the assistance of his sister, the Queen of Navarre, and retired to his estates, to prepare for his erratic enterprises in the Low Countries (February 1578). As for Guise, their attitude towards him was so threatening that he no longer ventured to enter the Louvre unless strongly accompanied.

However, their day of reckoning was at hand, and it was a woman who dealt the first blow to their despotism. The Queen of Navarre had been greatly irritated by the insolence with which they had treated her brother, and she was still further incensed by the impudent manner in which Caylus announced his pretensions to her favours. She resolved to be avenged, and, by feigning a preference for Charles de Balsac, Sieur d'Entragues, surnamed *le bel* d'Entragues, one of the gentlemen of the Duc de Guise and a noted swordsman, deftly engaged the two young gallants in a violent quarrel, which was followed by the inevitable duel. This duel, known to history as the Duel of the *Mignons*, was fought in the Marché aux Chevaux, originally the courtyard of the Palais des Tournelles, on April 27, 1578. Caylus had, as his seconds, two of his fellow *mignons*, Maugiron and Livarot; d'Entragues was



supported by Ribérac and Schomberg, who, like himself, belonged to the Duc de Guise's household. It was, in fact, Valois against Guise. The combat was of course, *à outrance*, as were all the duels of that epoch, and of the most murderous description. Maugiron and Schomberg were left dead upon the field. Ribérac died two days later at the Hôtel de Guise, to which he had been conveyed. Caylus, who is said to have received no less than nineteen wounds, lingered for nearly three weeks, and then expired at the Hôtel de Boissy, clasping the hand of his royal master, who had spent hours every day since the affray in the sick-room. Livarot, though severely wounded, eventually recovered, though he was a cripple for the rest of his days. D'Entragues escaped with only a flesh-wound in the arm—a small price to pay for having destroyed in one day the reputation of the King's famous champions.

Henri III indulged in the most extravagant expressions of grief for the death of his favourites. He embraced their corpses, had their hair cut off, in order that he might preserve it, ordered that their bodies should be embalmed and lie in state, as though they had been Princes of the Blood, obliged the whole Court to attend their funerals, and erected a superb mausoleum of white marble for them in the Church of Saint-Paul, which was henceforth known to the Parisians as “the seraglio of the *mignons*.” His Majesty was furious against d'Entragues, and announced his intention of having him brought to trial for murder. But d'Entragues had taken refuge at the Hôtel de Guise, and the duke dared the King to touch him. “M. d'Entragues,” said he, “has conducted himself as a *preux chevalier* and a true-hearted gentleman. If any person seeks to molest him, he shall feel the edge of my sword, which cuts sharply.”

The Parisians, who detested the lawless favourites, were delighted, and the King spoke no more about bringing d'Entragues to trial; but he resolved to avenge



CHARLES DE BALZAC D'ENTRAGUES.



himself on the man whom he feared to strike, by attacking his honour. Encouraged by him, one of the surviving *mignons*, Paul de Caussade, Comte de Saint-Mesgrin, began to pay assiduous court to the Duchesse de Guise, and presently it was whispered that the duchess regarded him with no common favour.

This Saint-Mesgrin wielded a dangerous blade. In a duel, he would very probably kill the duke; if, on the other hand, the duke were to kill him, he would lose, by this first duel, the prestige of his rank, and have all the swashbucklers in France on his hands. Guise, however, appeared to be deaf to the scandal, notwithstanding that Saint-Mesgrin, growing bolder, had begun to boast, truly or untruly—most probably the latter—of his *bonne fortune*. His brothers, Mayenne and the Cardinal de Guise,<sup>1</sup> became angry and uneasy, but, not caring to approach the duke themselves on the matter, commissioned an intimate friend of his, Bassompierre, to enlighten him.

One morning, Bassompierre sought Guise in his private cabinet, wearing so sad and downcast a countenance that the duke immediately inquired what ailed him. "Monseigneur," replied Bassompierre, "I am in a difficulty. A few days since, a person whom I hold in high esteem consulted me on the way which I should consider most expedient to inform a third party of the distressing fact that there is a rumour that his wife is unworthy of his confidence, though the party in question entertains not the smallest suspicion of her faithlessness. Such, Monseigneur, is the cause of the chagrin which you have detected. It would, therefore, greatly relieve my mind, since we have happened upon the subject, if you would advise me what counsel I should offer to my friend upon a question so delicate."

<sup>1</sup> Louis de Lorraine, the first Cardinal de Guise, Archbishop of Rheims, had died March 24, 1578, and his youngest nephew had succeeded to his archiepiscopal see, and, on being created a cardinal, assumed the title his uncle had borne.

Guise, perceiving the drift of his friend's remarks, gravely rejoined, with a like dissimulation: "Whoever the person may be, Monsieur, who has consulted you, if he calls himself the friend of the injured party, let him avenge his friend's affront. In my opinion, he who is so indiscreet as to reveal to a husband the dishonour of which he remains in ignorance heaps insult upon injury. As for myself, Monsieur, God has bestowed upon me a wife as virtuous as I could desire. I give thanks to Heaven that never yet have I had occasion to distrust her honour. Nevertheless, if such a misfortune were to occur, and any individual were so rash as to enlighten me upon the matter—you see this sword—well, the life, then, of that imprudent person should first be the forfeit of his temerity."<sup>1</sup>

Bassompierre thereupon wisely held his peace, but he carried the message to Mayenne and the Cardinal de Guise, and shortly afterwards L'Estoile reports that "on July 21, Saint-Mesgrin, young gentleman of Bordeaux, handsome, rich, and elegant, one of the *mignons*, leaving the Château du Louvre, where the King was, at eleven o'clock in the evening, and being in the Rue du Louvre, near the Rue Saint-Honoré, was attacked by pistol-shots and blows from sword and dagger by twenty or thirty unknown men, who left him for dead in the street, in such wise that he expired the next day." Among the assassins, the watch, who had endeavoured, though too late, to intervene in the affray, thought they distinguished the Duc de Mayenne. This brother of Guise wore a square-cut beard, instead of the pointed one which was the fashion of the time, and was also recognisable by a stocky hand, which is said to have been "round as a leg of mutton." Henri III, when he learned that Saint-Mesgrin had gone to join Caylus and Maugiron, appeared to be deeply affected; "but there was no

<sup>1</sup> Relation of Charles Maurice le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, written with his own hand in the margin of Rigault's MS. of De Thou's history, and cited by Martha Freer, *Henri III: his Court and Times*.



PAUL D'ESTUER DE CAUSSADE, COMTE DE SAINT-MESGRIN.

inquiry made, the King being warned that the Duc de Guise had had it done, because of the rumour that this *mignon* was the lover of his wife.”<sup>1</sup> The King consoled himself for his inability to avenge the death of his favourite by giving him the same funeral honours as Caylus and Maugiron, and burying him in the same vault in the Church of Saint Paul.<sup>2</sup>

Henri III's grief for the untimely end of his favourites was not of long duration; they were soon forgotten and replaced. What, however, did not pass away with the regrets of the King, was his hatred and jealousy of the Guises and the fear with which they now inspired him. His desire to erect a rampart against their enterprises appears to have been one of the principal motives for his institution of a new order—the famous Ordre du Saint-Esprit—which he founded in December 1578. Henri hoped, by this institution, to seduce the principal partisans of the Guises and the Huguenots. He had intended to annex to the brevets of the Knights of the Order, not only exemptions and notable privileges, but *commanderies* formed at the expense of the great abbeys of France. But the Pope, displeased with the Peace of Bergerac, would not consent to this new alienation of ecclesiastical property, and his Majesty was obliged to renounce it. The creation of the new order was therefore very far from having the results upon which he had counted.

Henri III, despised by every one, had every one to fear. His brother occasioned him as much anxiety as the Guises. After effecting his escape from the Louvre in the previous February, Anjou had made his way to Angers, where he issued a proclamation, protesting against the disorders of the Government, the concessions made

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

<sup>2</sup> During the obsequies of Saint-Mesgrin, Grammont, one of the surviving *mignons*, assassinated outside the Church of Saint-Paul an unfortunate gentleman who had had a dispute with one of his pages.

to the Huguenots, and so forth. It was thought, from the tone of this document, that he intended to place himself at the head of the League, and endeavour to force the King to revoke the last edict of peace; and Henri hastened to send Catherine to Angers to appease *Monsieur*. The latter, however, did not attempt any further disturbance of the kingdom, and presently gave the lie to his Catholic declarations by entering into close relations with La Noue and other Huguenot captains, while he occupied himself in raising soldiers for his expedition to Flanders. The King, on the vigorous representations of the Spanish Ambassador, made some half-hearted efforts to interfere with his brother's projects, but these did not prevent their realisation; and, in the second week in July 1578, Anjou, who had succeeded in raising a force of some 7,000 French volunteers, the most part gentlemen, crossed the Flemish frontier, and advanced to Arras and thence to Mons, preceded by a manifesto in which he declared himself authorised, by the ancient rights of France over Flanders, to embrace the defence of an oppressed people. On August 15, the States-General concluded an alliance with Anjou, declared him "defender of the liberty of the Netherlands," authorised him to guard the places which might be conquered on the right bank of the Meuse, accorded him three towns of surety, and promised that "in case hereafter they wished to take another prince, to prefer him to all others."

If Henri III found himself beset by daily increasing embarrassments, the position of the Duc de Guise, notwithstanding the immense popularity which he enjoyed amongst the clergy, the *bourgeoisie*, and the people, had been for some time past a very difficult one. Large though the revenues of the Lorraine princes were, their expenditure always exceeded them. François had dissipated all the savings of the prudent Claude, and left behind debts to the amount of 200,000 crowns; his brother, the first Cardinal de Lorraine, despite the

enormous sums he had received from all the rich benefices he had accumulated, died almost as deeply in debt. Henry of Lorraine's tastes were not extravagant; personally, he was one of the most abstemious of men and cared little for jewels and fine raiment. But he was obliged to live in the sumptuous fashion which he judged suited to his rank, and still more to his pretensions, and to support, not only the crowd of gentlemen, servants, pensioners, and hangers-on which was attached to every great House, but, as his father and uncle had done, a multitude of agents in every part of the kingdom and even beyond it, who supplied him with information and were always ready to intrigue and organise on his behalf. So impoverished was he by the vast expenditure which all this entailed, that in 1574, when the Cardinal de Lorraine died, he was obliged to borrow from the burghers of Rheims the money required to give the deceased prelate the magnificent funeral which he considered essential to the dignity of his House; and matters had been growing worse ever since. His grandmother, the old Duchesse Antoinette, was greatly distressed by his financial straits, "by the confusion of debts from which he could never get free."<sup>1</sup> His expenses, she wrote to her daughter-in-law, the Duchesse de Nemours, were "eating him up day and night"; every month he would have to sell some estate. And she advised him to dispose of his favourite estate of Nanteuil-le-Haudoin, which, she assured his mother, was absolutely necessary, "in order to escape ruin."

Guisé took the old lady's advice, and in September 1578 sold Nanteuil-le-Haudouin for 380,000 livres.\* But even this sacrifice only partially relieved him of the immense burden of debt which was weighing him down,

<sup>1</sup> He appears to have borrowed from all kinds of people, for among his debts at this time appear 100,000 livres to his cousin, the Duc d'Aumale, 17,000 to a banker of Lyons, 9,000 to a citizen of Paris, 45,000 to another citizen, and 2,400 to his notary.

<sup>2</sup> To Gaspard de Schomberg. He had refused to sell it to the King the year before for a much larger sum. He had shortly before this sold his estates of Hombourg and Saint-Avold to the Duke of Lorraine.



and which he estimated at a sum exceeding 10,000,000 francs in money of to-day. "At the same time, the demands upon his coffers multiplied; from all quarters hands were extended towards him. The accomplishment of his ambitious designs was being delayed far longer than he had calculated, and, in the meantime, ruin seemed to be approaching. He saw himself beaten; he allowed himself to be obsessed by the spectacle of his distress. Were, then, the fortunes of a family elevated, for seventy years, by prodigies of foresight, genius, and tenacity, about to founder for the want of a little money? Were so many riches dissipated, so much blood shed, so many dreams cherished, all to be lost for a small sum? It was impossible to curtail his expenses; to disband his captains was not to be thought of; his preachers, his bourgeois, his agents at Rome, his lawyers' clerks, his secret couriers, must be paid their wages. Expenses were increasing, resources were exhausted. Where was the money to be found? It was a cruel punishment by which the headstrong and careless Henri de Guise must for long have been tortured before resigning himself to the worst of degradations."<sup>1</sup>

Until the death of the Cardinal de Lorraine at the end of 1574, the relations between Spain and the Guises had been exceedingly close; but his nephew did not continue his uncle's policy in that direction, and in June 1576 we find Mary Stuart, whose hopes were now centred in Philip II, charging her representative in Paris to remonstrate with her kinsmen on the little attention which they appeared to pay the Spanish Ambassador. At the time of the organisation of the League, however, Guise began to feel the need of a foreign ally to aid him in his ambitious projects, but it was not to Philip that he turned, but to his half-brother, Don Juan of Austria, whom he judged far more likely to answer his purpose; and when, in October 1576, the latter passed through France, on his way to assume the office of

<sup>1</sup> Henri Fournier, *les Ducs de Guise et leur époque*.

Viceroy of the Netherlands, in succession to Requesens, the two young princes had a long interview at Joinville.

The hero of Lepanto was then in his thirty-second year, "*le prince de l'Europe le plus beau et le mieux fait*"; "endowed by Nature with a cast of countenance so gay and pleasing that there was hardly any one whose goodwill and love he did not immediately win"<sup>1</sup>; and, it must be confessed, with a brain which was not a little turned by his naval and military successes and the enthusiasm they had evoked. He and his host had much in common, and "were made to please and to understand one another."<sup>2</sup> Both were among the handsomest men of their time; both possessed of remarkable personal courage; both had won renown in war, though nothing which the Lorraine prince had ever achieved could compare with the victories which the son of Charles V had gained; both were intoxicated by the incense of popular adulation; both were tormented by ambitious dreams, and saw no prospect of realising them by any means consistent with loyalty to their respective Sovereigns. What passed at the Joinville interview, Philip II alone knew, and he kept the secret, as a pledge of the survivor's docility; but it seems pretty safe to conjecture that promises of mutual support were exchanged, and that it was decided that Don Juan, having subdued or pacified his brother's subjects in the Low Countries, should turn his arms against England, and, with the aid of Guise, dethrone Elizabeth, liberate and espouse the captive Queen of Scots, and rule with her the two united kingdoms, and, probably, the Netherlands as well; and that, in return for the assistance which the Lorraine prince was to render him, he should support the latter's designs on the throne of France, when a favourable opportunity of prosecuting them should arise.

In April 1578, Guise found himself in a position to

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Marguerite de Valois.*

<sup>2</sup> Bouillé, *l'Histoire des Ducs de Guise.*

execute the vast projects which he had discussed with Don Juan. He had assembled an army of 10,000 men, which he was prepared to lead to Calais and embark in a few hours ; Don Juan was to hold himself in readiness to embark at Gravelines with 10,000 Germans, when the two expeditions would sail for Scotland, land at Leith, liberate Mary Stuart, raise a revolution in England, dethrone Elizabeth, and restore the Catholic faith. They waited only for the authorisation of the King of Spain, for Don Juan was not yet prepared to act without his brother's sanction ; and Guise and Vargas, the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, sent repeated messages to Philip, urging him to consent. His Catholic Majesty, however, desired time for reflection, and allowed the whole summer to pass away, while he sat in his cabinet in the Escorial, surrounded by his secretaries, writing endless despatches, taking innumerable notes, and weighing the arguments for and against the proposed venture. At the end of six months he was still reflecting, and expressed the opinion that, "as the matter was of such weight and consequence, it behoved him to journey with a leaden foot." It was, indeed, with only too much reason that one of Mary's principal supporters in Scotland, the Archbishop of Glasgow, wrote to him : "I will tell you the plain truth : you are so long in resolving, and you apply your remedies so slowly, that I know not what to write to you."

It was probably of design that Philip II refused to authorise the adventure which the two young princes were contemplating. When, at the end of March 1578, he had caused Don Juan's intriguing secretary, Escovedo, to be assassinated, he must have learned, from the murdered man's papers, that the minds of his master and the Duc de Guise were not entirely occupied with the advantages of his crown ; and he had no wish to spend his doubloons in furthering their personal ambitions. During these suspicious hesitations, Don Juan died suddenly at Namur (October 1, 1578), of a fever brought

on by the fatigues of his recent campaign and chagrin at his failure to accomplish the impossible task entrusted to him, according to most historians, though not a few of his contemporaries do not hesitate to assert that he was poisoned by one of Philip's agents. Any way, his papers, and even his corpse, disappeared, and very soon afterwards Guise, alarmed at the possibility of highly inconvenient revelations in regard to his dealings with the deceased prince, with whom he had maintained an active correspondence ever since their interview at Joinville, and eager to find a means of escape from the financial difficulties which harassed him at every turn, became a pensioner of the King of Spain.

The son of the saviour of Metz and the conqueror of Calais had not waited to touch Philip's gold to reveal to him secrets of State. In April 1578, we find him communicating to the Spanish Ambassador, Vargas, certain important intelligence which the Governor of Calais had sent to Henri III and the details of the discussion which had followed in the Council. He had also informed him that the King was opposed to his brother's designs on Flanders, and that the English contemplated the seizure of Gravelines, and had promised that "if he learned anything else, he would warn the Ambassador."<sup>1</sup> At this time Don Juan was still alive, and Guise might have supposed that their common projects were likely to be of more service to France than those of *Monsieur*, and that, by giving information to Philip, he was assisting his own ally. But after Don Juan's death he could have been under no such illusion. He had consented to receive a salary—which, whenever it was in arrears, he did not hesitate to demand in the most insistent manner—and had descended to the condition of one of Philip's agents. Vargas assured his master that it was well worth while to attach the duke to his service, "in consideration of his rank, his following, his personal worth, and the importance of

<sup>1</sup> Archives Nationales, *Papiers de Simancas*.

his family"; that he was "accounted by every one the chief man in the kingdom, and was "well disposed towards the King of Spain, initiated already into his service, and capable, in the great affairs that might supervene, of procuring greater advantages in one day than would otherwise be attained in many years." Philip acted on his Ambassador's advice, and Guise's pension was fixed at 200,000 livres. Sorely depleted though the King of Spain's coffers were after pursuing for so many years a policy which was ruining his subjects, he could still find the money to corrupt the most influential personage in France.

Certain writers have endeavoured to extenuate Guise's conduct, by arguing that the sense of patriotism, particularly among princes and great nobles, was not so highly developed in the sixteenth century as in our own time, and that Guise was only following the example of the first Prince de Condé and Coligny, who did not hesitate to accept the money of Elizabeth. But between the action of the Huguenot leaders and that of Guise there is a very wide difference. In the first place, Condé and Coligny accepted the gold of the foreigner, not, as did Guise, for the furtherance of personal ambitions, but to save French Protestantism from destruction. In the second, Elizabeth, beset by difficulties at home and abroad, was in no sense an enemy whom France had cause to fear; in fact, she was not an enemy at all, intervening on behalf of the Huguenots merely because she feared that their subjugation would be followed by the union of the two great Catholic Powers against her. Philip II, on the other hand, was the most dangerous enemy whom France possessed, as Guise must have very well known. He did not confine his ambition, like his father, Charles V, to annexing a few French provinces; he coveted the whole kingdom.

At the same time, as one of Guise's biographers<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, it is only just to remember that when

<sup>1</sup> H. C. Macdowall, "Henry of Guise and other Portraits."

the duke first bent his neck to the yoke of Spain, the services which he contemplated rendering Philip did not involve any direct act of treason to his own sovereign and country. He merely intended to associate himself in Philip's schemes for the conquest of England and the liberation of his kinswoman Mary Stuart, whose cause he had now definitely espoused; and this is the explanation of the otherwise unaccountable fact that for nearly seven years the League remained practically dormant.

That during this period Guise's mind was occupied largely by such projects there is abundant evidence. In December 1578, when intelligence reached him that Elizabeth was dangerously ill, he planned an invasion of England, to take place in the event of her death. But Elizabeth recovered, and action was postponed. In February 1580, he and Vargas were busy with new schemes whereby they believed that in a few days a revolution might be effectually engineered in England, and that country placed under Philip's control; but nothing came of them. Two years later, at a midnight conference in Paris between Guise, the English Jesuits Fathers Holt and Creighton, and Tassis, Vargas's successor, the duke proposed that an invasion should be organised in the name of the Pope, under the pretext of an expedition against the Barbary pirates. The Jesuits, however, were of opinion that his Holiness would prove unequal to such a task, and that it would be better that the King of Spain should have the direction of the affair and the Pontiff confine his co-operation to footing the bill. Philip raised objections to the plan proposed; he always did. At the same time, he warned Tassis that he was not to allow any one to suspect him of making difficulties; he was to throw all the blame for the delay on the Pope. After waiting nearly a year, Guise announced that he had a new project which would "make a great noise in the world, if it were carried into execution," and that if Philip would furnish



him with 100,000 crowns, he was prepared to undertake the entire responsibility. Philip demurred to producing so large a sum ; he considered that the Pope ought to bear part at least of the expense, and advised Guise to apply to him direct. And so it went on, Guise constantly proposing fresh plans, only to be met with objections or delay on the part of Philip, who, though he sent the duke repeated assurances of the confidence which he reposed in him, declined to furnish him with those tangible proofs without which he could do nothing.

The fact of the matter is that Philip, though he was at pains to prevent Guise from suspecting it, never had any serious intention of assisting the latter to invade England. His own schemes against England were as yet far from matured, and, when they were, he would have no need of Guise's sword. What he required Guise for was to create trouble in France ; to divide her and render her impotent to interfere with his plans in the Netherlands and against England. It was with this object, and no other, that he had taken the Lorraine prince into his pay ; and his Ambassador in Paris was instructed to allow no opportunity to slip of emphasising the critical position in which the duke would find himself, were Henri III to die and the kingdom fall into the hands of his enemies Anjou and Henri of Navarre, and to assure him that, if he desired to be beforehand with them, he could count with certainty on the support of the Catholic King.

Guise might have been less ready to listen to the voice of the tempter, had the French Court during these years shown the least desire for a better understanding with him. But, so far was this from being the case, that Henri III seemed to take a malicious pleasure in affronting his most powerful subject on every possible occasion. He reversed, by letters-patent, the decision which had given Guise precedence over his brother-in-law, the Duc de Montpensier ; he excluded

him in the most pointed manner from the list of those selected for the Ordre du Saint-Esprit; in the Lovers' War of 1580,<sup>1</sup> an independent command was again given to Mayenne, while his elder brother was left unemployed; and a noble or gentleman could not accept an invitation from him to tennis more than once, without the danger of being reprimanded by the King.

And, while Guise was thus slighted, the reigning favourites, Jean Nogaret de la Valette, and Anne de Joyeuse, were being loaded with riches and honours. The first was created Duc d'Épernon, the second Duc de Joyeuse, and given precedence over all peers, except those descended, as were Nevers, Guise, and Nemours, from Sovereign Houses, and the Princes of the Blood. The King purchased for Joyeuse the office of Admiral of France, made him Governor of Normandy, presented him with the beautiful estate of Limours, married him to the Queen's sister, Marguerite de Lorraine, to whom he gave the dower of a Daughter of France, and celebrated the nuptials by festivities which are said to have cost over 3,000,000 livres, notwithstanding that, at the time, he hardly knew where to find money for the ordinary

<sup>1</sup> So called, because the Queen of Navarre, to revenge herself for the insults and humiliations she had recently suffered at the hands of Henri III, employed her husband's mistress, Mlle de Fosseux ("Fosseuse") and one of her waiting-women named Xaintes, of whom the susceptible Béarnais was likewise enamoured, to incite him to take up arms, and also the ladies of her Court, several of whom were beloved by the King's counsellors, to persuade their admirers to do all in their power to push Navarre to a renewal of hostilities. It is, however, probable that Marguerite's intrigues did little more than precipitate matters, since recourse to arms had been virtually resolved upon at the Huguenot conference which met at Montauban in July 1578; while the Catholics of the South were equally ready for war. The chief event of the desultory campaign which followed was the storming of Cahors, the chief town of the district of Quercy, which formed part of Marguerite's appanage, of which her husband had never yet been able to get possession. In this affair, which entailed several days of murderous street-fighting, the King of Navarre was afforded an opportunity for the display of that obstinate courage which made so great an impression upon the imagination of his countrymen, and earned him the admiration and respect even of his enemies. The war which, in default of any action of importance, degenerated into mere brigandage, was brought to a close in November 1580 by the Treaty of Fleix, which confirmed all previous concessions to the Reformers and secured the Queen of Navarre in the enjoyment of her appanage.

expenses of the Royal Household. D'Épernon, a typical Gascon, brave, greedy of gain, ambitious, and unscrupulous, received the important charge of Colonel-General of Infantry, in succession to Strozzi, and the governments of the Three Bishoprics and the Boulonnais, to which were subsequently added those of the Angoumois, Saintonge, Aunis and Touraine; and his royal master, after an unsuccessful attempt to marry him to the younger daughter of the Duke of Lorraine, obtained for him the hand of Marguerite de Foix, Comtesse de Candale, a granddaughter of the Constable de Montmorency, notwithstanding the strong protests of the head of the lady's family. In fact, every advantage, every preferment, seemed to be reserved for these two young men, who had come to Court practically penniless, with little beyond their good looks, their personal courage, and their skill in bodily exercises to recommend them. It was evident that Henri III wished to elevate them as high as possible, in order to make use of their grandeur to counterbalance the influence of the Lorraine princes, and they flaunted their wealth, their authority, and their boundless credit with the King in Guise's face with an insolence calculated to exasperate the most forbearing of men.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was at the instigation of Joyeuse and d'Épernon that Henri III dismissed the greater number of the gentlemen of his Household, who, the favourites represented, were dependents of princes or nobles affiliated either to the Huguenots or the League, and therefore not to be trusted, and replaced them by a special guard, composed exclusively of their own creatures—the famous "*Quarante-cinq*," beneath whose weapons the Duc de Guise was one day to perish, in the King's apartments at Blois. The creation of the "*Quarante-cinq*," generally placed in 1585, after the insurrection of the League, was, in reality, decided upon in 1584, and the company was installed at the Louvre in the last days of December of that year. They were recruited principally from Gascony, were all unmarried, and for the most part "cadets and without the means of maintaining a great appearance." They entered into an engagement for two years and three months, and their pay was 1,200 crowns per annum, all their expenses being borne by the King, to whom they were bound by particular oath to render him any service he might require of them. Their captain was François de Montpézat, a cadet of an old Gascon family, who, on his appointment, was created Baron de Laugnac (and not Loignac, as the name is generally written). Laugnac, who appears to have been an individual of a singularly ferocious and unscrupulous

Such was the state of affairs when, in the early summer of 1584, an event occurred which transformed the situation, awakened into dangerous activity the forces which had lain dormant since the Peace of Bergerac, and gave Philip II the opportunity for which he had been so patiently waiting.

character, even for those times, had figured, some four years earlier, in a murderous duel between Charles de Goutaut-Biron and Claude d'Escars, Prince de Carency, in which he had acted as one of the former's seconds. Carency and both his seconds were killed, and Laugnac is said to have struck his adversary several blows after he had fallen, and to have stood watching his dying agonies with a cold cruelty which revolted every one who heard of it. The "*Quarante-cinq*" were very unpopular from the first in Paris, and were called by the people the "cut-throats" (*coup-jarrets*), a name which they were to do only too much to justify.

## CHAPTER XXIX

The death of *Monsieur* makes Henri of Navarre heir-presumptive to the throne of France—Mission of the Duc d'Épernon to Gascony—The King of Navarre refuses to abjure the Protestant faith, and a renewal of the civil war becomes inevitable—Guise decides to espouse the claims of the Cardinal de Bourbon to the throne—Bernardino de Mendoza becomes Spanish Ambassador in France, and obliges Guise and the Catholic party to act—Treaty of Joinville between the League and Philip II—Mission of Père Mathieu to Rome—The United Provinces send an embassy to Henri III to implore his assistance—The League takes up arms—Manifesto of Péronne and reply of the King—Successes of the Leaguers—Pitiable irresolution of the King—Guise and Catherine—The Treaty of Nemours marks the triumph of the League and the virtual abdication of Henri III.

ON June 11, 1584, the Duc d'Anjou, who had been ill with consumption for some months, died at Chateau-Thierry, regretted by none save his sister and, possibly, by his mother. His death made the King of Navarre heir-presumptive to the French crown, and, as Henri III had, for some time past, abandoned all hope of his consort bearing him children, the question of the succession at once became of paramount importance. But the accession of an excommunicated heretic to the throne was repugnant to the whole Catholic population, and was certain to be opposed violently by a considerable section of it. The intimate connection of the State and the orthodox Church was held to be a fundamental law of the monarchy; it was impossible to depart from it without shaking the social edifice to its very foundations, overthrowing all traditions, and outraging the public conscience. Even men of moderate views, who were willing enough that the Huguenots should be tolerated, were alarmed at the prospect of their domination.

Very intelligent, whenever he could free himself for a time from his idle and voluptuous habits, Henri III had foreseen this, and, about the middle of May, that is to say, some three weeks before Monsieur's death, had despatched the Duc d'Épernon to the King of Navarre, "bearing him letters, in which he admonished, exhorted, and entreated him, seeing that the life of the Duc d'Anjou, his brother, was despaired of, and that the news of his death was daily expected, to come to Court and go to Mass, because he desired to recognise him as his true heir and successor, and to give him such rank and dignity near his person as his qualification of brother-in-law and heir to the throne deserved. There was a report that he was sent with 200,000 écus, which the King had given him to defray the cost of his journey; and he was accompanied by more than 100 gentlemen, to the majority of whom the King gave sums of one, two, or three hundred écus, to render him good and faithful service and make a suitable appearance."<sup>1</sup>

D'Épernon and his sumptuous retinue were received by the King of Navarre, at Pamiers, with every mark of honour and esteem, but the duke effected very little. The Catholics about Henri, and two or three of his more moderate Protestant advisers, had been, for some time past, urging him to remove by his conversion—or re-conversion—the only obstacle to his recognition as heir-presumptive to the throne. But the great mass of the Huguenots were bitterly opposed to such a recantation, and, lightly though he held by his creed, he felt that the moment had not yet come when he could afford to offend them. He feared, too, the versatility of Henri III and knew that the Guises' zeal for the Old Faith was but a cloak for their ambition. And so d'Épernon was answered with protestations of gratitude and loyalty. The King of Navarre, he was informed, was, indeed, deeply sensible of his Majesty's goodness, but "a man's religion could not be put on and off like his shirt," and,

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.



though he was perfectly willing to receive instruction, or to submit to the decision of a free and universal council, he could not see his way to accept the invitation to Court, and, still less, to go straightway to Mass. In other matters he held himself entirely at his Majesty's orders, and was prepared to come to his assistance with all the forces of his party, in the event of the King breaking with the League.

The fact that the legitimate heir to the throne was a heretic made a renewal of the civil war inevitable, and, on the death of Anjou, the Guises and the League at once began to organise their forces for the coming struggle, and Philip II spared no pains to urge Guise to action. The ultra-Catholic party, who had long lost all confidence in their vacillating sovereign, turned towards Henri de Lorraine, as to their champion and true leader; and the King spoke only the truth when he declared that, though he himself wore the Crown, it was M. de Guise who ruled over the hearts of his subjects. The latter, however, was far too astute to allow it to be suspected at this juncture that he himself had any designs upon the succession; and accordingly espoused the claims of Henri of Navarre's uncle, the Cardinal de Bourbon, a man of sixty-two, as vain and weak and voluptuous as his elder brother Antoine had been, whom he had no difficulty in persuading to betray the interests of his nephew, under the pretext that his duty to the Church demanded it. His Eminence laid aside his cardinal's dress, petitioned the Holy See to release him from his vows, talked of marrying Guise's sister, Catherine de Lorraine, Duchesse de Montpensier, whose elderly husband had died two years before, and was gravely acknowledged by the Guises and their adherents as the heir to the throne.

In September 1584, Tassis, who had acted as Philip II's *chargé d'affaires* in Paris since the recall of Vargas at the beginning of 1581, was superseded by one of the most able and unscrupulous of all Philip II's diplomatists,

Don Bernardino de Mendoza, the same personage whom Elizabeth had so unceremoniously expelled from England after the discovery of Throckmorton's conspiracy.

Mendoza arrived in France with orders to force Guise and the Catholic party to act, and so well did he fulfil his instructions that on January 16, 1585, a secret treaty was signed, at the Château of Joinville, between the Ducs de Guise and Mayenne, stipulating in their own names and in those of their brother the Cardinal de Guise and their cousins the Ducs d'Aumale and Elbeuf; Tassis and Moreo, representing Philip II, and François de Roucherolles, Sieur de Mainville, representing the Cardinal de Bourbon and the principal agent of Guise with the secret council of the League at Paris. The contracting parties entered into a "perpetual union," with the object of extirpating sects and heresies both in France and the Netherlands, and of excluding from the throne heretic princes or "those who might permit public impunity to heretics."

The French princes contracting engaged to cause the exercise of heresy to be prohibited in France, to pursue "*à outrance* and until they had annihilated them" the heretics who refused to return into the fold of the Church and to cause the decrees of the Council of Trent to be accepted in their entirety. The Cardinal de Bourbon, in the event of the King's death, undertook to ratify the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, to abjure all alliance with the Turk,<sup>1</sup> and to put a stop to "all illicit navigations towards the Indies and islands appertaining to his Catholic Majesty"—in other words, to abandon entirely the trade of both the Indies to the Spaniards. The French princes contracting further bound them-

<sup>1</sup> In November 1581, the Sultan Mourad had sent an embassy to Henri III, bringing the confirmation of the old treaties of the Porte with France. At the same time, Mourad had offered to aid the King at need with his naval forces, and had invited him to send a representative to the ceremony of the circumcision of his eldest son, which caused the Leaguers to declare that Henri III was the godfather of the Grand Turk's son.

selves to aid Philip by every means in their power to recover Cambrai.

The King of Spain, on his side, agreed to furnish a subsidy of 600,000 crowns in the first six months after hostilities had begun, and 50,000 crowns a month so long as the war lasted, all of which sums were to be repaid Philip on the accession of the Cardinal de Bourbon, "or of his successor."

All princes, officers of the Crown, nobles, gentlemen, towns and communities of France with whom the contracting princes had or might have intelligence, and particularly the Ducs de Mercœur and de Nevers, were included in the treaty. Finally, the parties bound themselves not to treat separately with the Very Christian King, or any other prince whatsoever, on the subject of the said union; and by two supplementary articles Guise and Mayenne engaged to deliver up to Philip II the pretender of Portugal, Don Antonio, who had taken refuge in France, on condition that he should content himself with keeping him in security; and the Cardinal de Bourbon promised to Spain the cession of Lower Navarre and Béarn.

Such was the Treaty of Joinville, which, as Henri Martin, truly observes, may be summed up in a very few words: it delivered the interior of France to Ultramontanism, the frontiers and all beyond them to Spain. The Frenchmen who signed this infamous compact were traitors in the very worst sense—that is to say, traitors, not only to their King, but to their country as well.

Towards the end of the previous year, the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Guises, and the Duc de Nevers had despatched to Rome a Jesuit of Lyons, one Père Mathieu, whose indefatigable zeal in journeying up and down the country on the business of the Holy Union had earned him the name of "the courier of the League." Père Mathieu was instructed to demand the advice and support of the Holy Father, who appears to have received

him with open arms. About the time of the conference at Joinville he returned and announced that the Pope, after consulting the Cardinal di Como, his first Minister, and the General of the Jesuits, authorised recourse to arms against the heretics, with or without the permission of the King. Gregory XIII accorded verbally plenary indulgence for this holy work, and promised that, so soon as the Catholics had raised the standard of revolt, he would declare the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé incapable of succeeding to the throne of France. The Jesuit added that his Holiness "*did not approve of any attempt on the life of the King*, for that could not be done with a good conscience; but if they were to seize his person, remove from him those who were the cause of the ruin of the kingdom, and place about him men who would hold him in check and give him good counsel, that would be found good."

The Duc de Nevers, who, though much irritated against Henri III, had little affection for the Lorraine princes, and had not joined the League without a good deal of hesitation, declared that this secret authorisation of its proceedings by the Pope did not appear to him sufficient. The Holy Father ought to have the courage to issue a solemn Bull; and he set out for Italy with the object of conferring in person with Gregory XIII. The Guises, however, were little disposed to postpone recourse to arms until the duke's return.

The crisis was now rapidly approaching. William of Orange had been assassinated a few weeks after Anjou's death, and the States, left without a leader, decided to throw themselves into the arms of France, and implored Henry III to come to their assistance before Belgium was entirely subjugated. Towards the end of January 1585, a great embassy came to offer to the King a dozen places of surety and 100,000 crowns per month, of which Elizabeth, anxious at any price to prevent the triumph of Philip II, was prepared to guarantee a part. The feeble King, not daring to give the envoys from the

Netherlands a public reception, sent directions to them to stop at Senlis, whence they were brought secretly to Paris. Their arrival, however, did not escape the vigilance of Mendoza, who warned the King not to listen to excommunicated rebels, lest he should bring down upon him the just vengeance of his Catholic Majesty. Henri III, irritated by the insolence of the Spaniard, replied, with that dignity which he could assume well enough upon occasion, that the Flemings were not rebels, but people unjustly oppressed; that France had always been the refuge of the unfortunate; that a King of France did not tremble before any one, and that neither threats nor dangers would make him deviate from the generosity of his ancestors towards those who had recourse to their protection. Some days later (February 12), he gave audience to the envoys, received them very graciously, and requested a little delay to enable him to deliberate upon the proposals they had made him.

On February 23, an English embassy, with Lord Derby at its head, arrived in Paris, ostensibly to present the King with the Order of the Garter, but really with the object of pressing him to accept the propositions of the United Provinces. His Majesty, to the great scandal of zealous Catholics, was solemnly invested with the ribbon of the Garter in the Church of the Augustins. It seemed as though Henri had decided on intervention in the Netherlands.

If he had, he was too late. What would have been perfectly practicable at the time of the death of Anjou, eight months earlier, had now become impossible. The League was ready; the King was not. Thoroughly alarmed lest Henri should intervene between him and his prey, Philip insisted that the Leaguers should lose no time in making the necessary diversion. The Prince of Parma and the Spanish Ambassador called upon Guise to execute the Treaty of Joinville, threatening him, it is said, to reveal everything to Henri III if he deferred



action. Guise and Mayenne thereupon assembled at Joinville the Leaguer nobility of Champagne and Burgundy, and despatched their agents into Switzerland and Germany to summon the Swiss Catholics and the *reiters* whom they had hired to march to their support. Then they separated: Guise to Châlons, which he seized, in the name of the Holy Union, on March 21; Mayenne, to get possession of Dijon. Meanwhile, the Leaguers of Picardy, with Aumale at their head, went to seek the Cardinal de Bourbon at his Château of Gaillen, and conducted him to Péronne, the cradle of the League.

The news of these movements surprised Henri III in the midst of the festivities of the Carnival, and promptly extinguished the spark of resolution which he had just shown. Declaring publicly that he desired to remain at peace with the King of Spain, he dismissed the envoys from the United Provinces, telling them that he could do nothing to help them until tranquillity had been restored in his own realm, and advising them to apply to the King of Navarre or the Queen of England. He took, however, some measures to meet the danger which threatened his authority. He wrote to Navarre, bidding him hold himself in readiness to come to his aid; published a declaration against those who were levying troops; sent recruiting agents into Switzerland and Germany; forbade the sale of arms in Paris except to those persons who gave their names and addresses; directed that the guards at the different gates of the capital should be strengthened; and removed the captains and lieutenants of the citizen militia and replaced them by royal officers. But, at the same time, he hastened to open negotiations, and at the end of March the Queen-mother set out for Champagne to confer with Guise.

But the League had got the start of the King, and intended to make the most of its advantage. On March 31, the confederates published a manifesto at Péronne, in which, after asserting that all the evils which beset



the kingdom were indirectly attributable to the King, they declared that they were prepared to take up arms to restore the dignity and unity of the Church, to expel unworthy favourites and advisers from Court, to prevent further troubles by settling the succession, and to provide for regular meetings of the States-General. And, in order to attain these objects, they swore to hold together and persevere, "until they should be heaped together upon one another in the tomb reserved for the last Frenchman fallen in the service of his God and country."<sup>1</sup>

To this manifesto the King, in the course of April, sent a singularly feeble reply, drafted, it is said, by the Secretary of State Villeroy, which served only to redouble the audacity of the confederate princes, already sufficiently stimulated by the news they were receiving from different parts of France. The revolt of the League was, in fact, the counterpart of the great Huguenot rising of 1562. Practically the whole of Champagne, and the greater part of Normandy, Brittany, Picardy, Burgundy, Berry, and Dauphiné declared in its favour; Châlons, Soissons, Rheims, Mézières, Rouen, Abbeville, Péronne, Dijon, Maçon, Auxonne, Orléans, and Lyons surrendered almost without a blow being struck. Toul and Verdun did the same; but the activity of d'Épernon, who strengthened the garrison of Metz and threw himself into the place a few hours before Guise appeared at the gates, succeeded in saving that important fortress for the King.

Meanwhile, in Paris, the printing-presses were pouring forth pamphlets, libels, and manifestos, in which Henri III was held up to odium as a second Herod, the very

<sup>1</sup> This document was signed only by the Cardinal de Bourbon—"whom they make their Asse to beare the whole burden," wrote Sir Edward Stafford, the English Ambassador—but a list of the chiefs of the League was circulated everywhere with it, in which figured all the Catholic princes of Europe. Guise and the Duke of Lorraine were designated as Lieutenant-Generals of the League. The latter prince had thus renounced, for the first time, the neutrality which he had maintained since the beginning of the Wars of Religion.

incarnation of all the corruption of his age. Notwithstanding all his ostentatious devotion, his pilgrimages, his penances, his confraternities, his orthodoxy was suspected; and the parochial clergy, the friars, and the Jesuits vied with one another in denouncing him as a traitor to the Faith, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, and an evil liver. Among the altar ornaments, the double cross of Lorraine was set up, and became henceforth the symbol of the League.

The situation was alarming, but it was far from hopeless. In the South and West, the rebellion had made little progress. At Marseilles, a *coup de main* which the Leaguers of that city had attempted, ended in a complete fiasco, and Provence had refused to rise. At Bordeaux, thanks to the energetic measures taken by the Maréchal de Matignon, Lieutenant-General of the King in Guienne, there was no attempt at an insurrection. In Languedoc, the Maréchal de Montmorency had repulsed the advances of the Guises and become reconciled with his former allies, the Huguenots. Nor were the means of resistance wanting. The greater part of the troops were still faithful; the Queen of England had offered 6,000 auxiliaries; the Venetians financial aid; 8,000 Swiss were on the march for France; Navarre had placed his forces at his brother-in-law's disposal, and the Reformers, feeling that for them it was a question of life or death, had everywhere rushed to arms, and were pressing the King to accept their aid. Finally, all unworthy though he was to rule over France, Henri III was none the less the descendant of St. Louis, and the reverence of twenty generations still guarded his throne and stood between him and his enemies.

But the last Valois King was a coward—a coward morally and physically. The Huguenots inspired him with even more fear and aversion than did the Leaguers, and Joyeuse and the majority of his counsellors urged him to be reconciled with the Catholics, rather than ally himself with heretics. His own sentiments and

superstitions inclined him in this direction; and he accordingly begged Navarre to remain inactive and allow the Leaguers "to demonstrate their evil intentions," promising, if he obeyed, to conclude no treaty prejudicial to him, and directed Catherine to make the best terms she could with Guise.

The old Queen, who had not grown less pusillanimous with age and thought as usual only of gaining time, was prepared to go very far to conciliate the rebels. But it was not far enough for Guise; and, after a first interview with her at Épernay, in which the duke protested that he was powerless to make terms without the consent of the other chiefs of the League, he persistently avoided her Majesty, who was reduced to following him about from place to place. At last, after two months of negotiations, the League presented an ultimatum. The King must enforce unity of religion by an edict, which all princes, peers and Parlements, officers of the Crown and governors of provinces and towns must swear to observe; and a number of places of surety must be handed over to the League, until the edict had been duly executed.

Henri III vacillated, a prey to the most pitiable irresolution. D'Épernon and Guillaume de Tavannes conjured him to place himself at the head of his troops and take a vigorous offensive, assuring him that the great majority of the Catholic nobility and gentry would not dare to take up arms against their sovereign. But timid counsels again prevailed; Villeroy, Bellièvre, Cheverny, and the confidants of Catherine terrified the King by exaggerating the strength of the rebel forces and the danger of a rising in Paris. If, said they, the King were to await the army of the League under the walls of the capital, Paris would be like a mine, ready to explode on the approach of the enemy; if, on the other hand, he departed with the royal forces, Paris would rise in insurrection behind him. And one check would ruin everything.

The King yielded, and on July 7, 1585, Catherine signed in his name at Nemours, to which town Guise had removed his headquarters from Châlons, a treaty which marked the triumph of the League and was, for her son, a virtual abdication. By this treaty, every religion save the Catholic was forbidden in the realm, under pain of death, and the same penalty was enjoined against all Protestant ministers who did not quit the country within a month, and against all other Huguenots who did not leave within six. War was to be declared against all those who, at the expiration of that period, did not make their submission, and the conduct of operations was to be entrusted to the chiefs of the League. Nine places of surety were to be handed over to the rebels, including Toul, Verdun, and Saint-Dizier, the keys of the eastern frontier, and Soissons and Tours in the heart of France.

On July 13, the King went to Saint-Maur and received the homage of the Cardinals de Bourbon and de Guise, the Duke of Lorraine and the Duc de Guise. On the 18th, having returned to Paris, he proceeded to the Palais de Justice to cause the edict proscribing the Reformed religion to be registered. On the way, he turned to the Cardinal de Bourbon and said: "I signed my last edict against my conscience, but very willingly, because it tended to the relief of my poor people. I sign this edict to-day, according to my conscience, but against my will, because I know that it will prove the ruin of me and of my realm."

The magistrates received the King clad in their scarlet robes—one of the presidents observed that "robes of mourning would have been more appropriate in this public calamity"<sup>1</sup>—and duly registered the edict; but they remonstrated vigorously against some of its articles. For though, for the most part, fervent Catholics, who had repeatedly protested against the edicts permitting the public exercise of the Reformed faith, with the

<sup>1</sup> De Thou.

exception of a few fanatics, they strongly disapproved of this wholesale proscription of a large body of their fellow-countrymen, from which they foresaw the most fatal consequences; and they were aghast at the blow which the dignity of the Crown had received. As he left the Palais de Justice, Henri was greeted by acclamations to which his ears had been for a long time unaccustomed.<sup>1</sup> "They were," remarks Henri Martin, "the alms bestowed by the victors on this royalty deprived and reduced to beggary. These fanatical clamours saluted the ruin of France. The experience of twenty-five years of disasters was lost. In religion, the Spanish system was triumphing, and the Inquisition was knocking at the gates; in politics, France was hastening towards a dynastic revolution and dismemberment."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to Pasquier, "the Leaguers had given money to a few of the common people and sweetmeats to a number of little children," to applaud this informal abdication.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de France jusqu'en 1789*, vol. xi.

## CHAPTER XXX

The triumph of Guise far more apparent than real—His difficulties—His obsequious letters to Philip II—Attitude of Henri III—Renewal of the war against the Protestants—The King manoeuvres to prevent the Guises from obtaining any decisive successes—The execution of Mary Stuart skilfully exploited by the agents of the League to increase the hatred with which Henri III is now regarded in Paris—The Council of the Sixteen—Guise's sister, the Duchesse de Montpensier, the moving spirit of the machinations of the Paris Leaguers—Conspiracy of Mayenne and the Sixteen to seize the person of the King—The plot revealed to Henri III, who, however, makes no attempt to punish the conspirators—Change in the character of the League—The position of Guise becoming daily more difficult—His interview with Henri III—Failure of the King to provide the duke with the troops promised him to resist the German invasion—Victory of Henri of Navarre over Joyeuse at Coutras—Guise's successes over the Germans at Vimory and Auneau establish him as the champion of Catholicism.

THE triumph of Guise appeared complete. He was receiving, besides the fortified towns which were to be placed in his hands as guarantees for the execution of the treaty, the command of the armies which were to be employed against the Protestants, the right of nominating officers, the disposal of the moneys set aside to pay them. His adherents were imposed upon the King as counsellors: d'Espinac, Archbishop of Lyons, and the Cardinal de Guise obtained admission to the Privy Council; La Châtre, who had distinguished himself by the vigour and success of his operations in the recent revolt, was promised the *bâton* of Marshal of France. There were no more favours except for the creatures of the Lorraine prince. Without combat, without resistance, the King was submitting to humiliations which even Charles the Bold had not ventured to exact from Louis XI, when he held him captive at Péronne.



However, shrewd observers did not fail to note that when, a week after the ratification of the Treaty of Nemours, Guise, accompanied by the Cardinals de Bourbon and de Guise and the Duke of Lorraine, entered Paris, where Mayenne had already arrived, he had not the air of a victor. "The Duc de Guise is melancholy," writes an anonymous correspondent of the Florentine Secretary of State. "He has lost his habitual gaiety, and his hair, though he is scarcely thirty-five years old, is already turning white at the temples."<sup>1</sup>

The fact is that Guise's triumph was more apparent than real, and already forces were at work which were calculated to compromise very seriously the victory which he had gained.

Chief among these was the changed attitude of the Holy See. Gregory XIII, as we have seen, had warmly approved of the League; but he had died in the spring of 1585, and his successor, Sixtus V, though as anxious for the suppression of heresy as Gregory had been, flatly refused to sanction the violence done to order and authority in the name of religion. "In what school did you learn that you are permitted to form parties contrary to the will of your legitimate prince?" he brusquely inquired of the Duc de Nevers, when that nobleman presented himself at the Vatican to enlist the new Pontiff's sympathies on behalf of the Holy Union. And he did not hesitate to censure the policy of his predecessor, who "had delivered over all Christendom to fire and bloodshed," by the encouragement which he had given the League.

This *volte-face* on the part of the Vatican was an exceedingly serious matter for Guise, for it meant that he could no longer count upon the support of some of the most influential members of the League, and, though he might scoff at the scruples of Nevers, "who would not fight unless he had a Papal Bull at the end of his lance," he was none the less aware of the difficulty of

<sup>1</sup> Cited by H. C. Macdowall, "Henry of Guise and other Portraits."

conducting a holy war, not only without the support, but even in defiance, of the Vicar of Christ.

Then, again, he had to reckon with the dissatisfaction of many of his adherents, who had taken up arms often at considerable pecuniary sacrifice, in the confident hope of recouping themselves by the spoliation of the Huguenots. Peace had, however, intervened between them and their prey, and, though it was certain that hostilities would very shortly be renewed, they might not be so ready to sell or mortgage their houses or lands again in order to rally to the double cross of Lorraine, but might prefer, like prudent gamblers, to cut their losses. Finally, there was his paymaster Philip II to be considered. Philip had forced Guise's hand in the previous spring, and he had strongly disapproved of the peace, being of opinion that, had hostilities been continued, still further concessions might have been extorted from Henri III. To satisfy him, Guise knew that he must be continually advancing, whereas many of his more moderate supporters considered that he had already gone quite far enough, and to allow them to suspect that he was acting under foreign dictation would be to alienate them altogether. But, above all things, it was necessary to conciliate Philip, for Guise was now in worse financial straits than ever, and solely dependent upon the Spaniard's assistance for the carrying out of every scheme. And so we find the haughty Lorraine prince, who, as chief of the French Catholics, had just dictated terms of peace to his own sovereign, abasing himself before the King of Spain and begging for money in lengthy, laborious epistles, full of obsequious expressions of gratitude for favours past and pressing entreaties for a continuance of his benefactions. Here is a specimen :—

“The benefaction which it pleases your Majesty to increase so liberally for the public utility has placed me personally under so 'great and so extreme an obligation,

that I cannot fail to thank you very humbly by the bearer of this. You may be well assured of the good-will and devotion that I cherish dearly, and of my very great fidelity to the very humble service of your Majesty, not desiring anything so much as to see myself honoured by your commands, which I shall execute at the hazard of my life, which will ever serve as the certain pledge of our promises, which I very humbly entreat your Majesty to keep very faithfully, there being neither force nor accident in the world capable of breaking or violating the results."

"Sad situation for this ambitious man!" observes one of Guise's biographers. "He dreams of the throne of Charlemagne, of his brother becoming Pope; he follows the traditions of each generation of Guises; he enjoys the acclamations of the populace; and he is obliged to pass his life in treasons and villainies and to cry to the foreigner: 'We have more need of being assisted during this peace.'" <sup>1</sup>

Henri III was in as great financial difficulties as the chief of the League, but he was determined that those who were forcing him into another ruinous war against his will should be made to shoulder the chief burden of it.

Accordingly, on August 11, he summoned to the Louvre the First President of the Parlement, Achille de Harlay, and the Provost of the Merchants, and, in the presence of the Cardinal de Guise, declared, with cold irony, that, as they had forced him to break the peace signed with the Protestants, it was only just that they should aid him to bear the expenses of the war. And he informed the First President that he should expect him and the other magistrates to forgo their official salaries, and the Provost of the Merchants that he should require a sum of 200,000 crowns from the citizens of his good town of Paris. Then, turning to

<sup>1</sup> Henri Forneron, *les Ducs de Guise et leur époque*.

the Cardinal de Guise, he said acidly: "It is for you, Monsieur, to see that the clergy do the rest. Do not imagine that I shall await the consent of the Pope. It is a holy war, undertaken on behalf of the Church, and the clergy must bear the expense of it."

The Provost of the Merchants was too astounded to utter a word, but the First President and the cardinal attempted to remonstrate. The King, however, cut them short. "It would have been better, then," said he, "to have believed me and to have maintained the peace, rather than to have decided upon war behind your counters and your chancels. I very much fear that, in destroying the *prêche*, we are greatly endangering the Mass. But the time for talk is past; we have now to act." And he dismissed them.<sup>1</sup>

Such sallies served only to render Henri III's position more false and more dangerous, by betraying his secret thoughts. He was none the less obliged to decide with Guise the plan of the campaign which was about to open. The duke demanded for himself the command of the army destined to defend the eastern provinces against the anticipated invasion of the German Protestants, and for Mayenne the direction of that which would operate against the King of Navarre in Guienne; while he proposed that the King should place himself at the head of an army of reserve in the centre of the realm. Henri III consented, but with the secret intention of using every means to prevent the Guises from obtaining any decisive successes.

On September 9, 1685, the new Pope, who, although he declined to countenance the League, was as much attached to the most extreme pretensions of Ultramontaniam as his predecessor had been, launched against Henri of Navarre and the Prince de Condé the Bull of excommunication which Gregory XIII had prepared, in which they were declared incapable of succeeding to the kingdom of France, "against which they had

<sup>1</sup> Davila; De Thou.

committed such enormous injuries and crimes." In October, a new edict reduced the remainder of the period of grace allowed the Protestants to six months, and hostilities began.

Contrary to all expectations, the war was carried on with so little vigour by the Catholics during the remainder of that year and the next that the Huguenots were able to hold their own. The nobility, for the most part, showed themselves very lukewarm in the so-called holy war, disliking equally the alliance of the Guises with the fanatical population of Paris and other towns, their disloyalty to the Crown, and their subservience to Spain. In Languedoc, the support of Montmorency, always a determined enemy of the pretensions of the House of Lorraine, sufficed to secure the predominance, of the Protestants; while in Poitou, their cause was greatly strengthened by the conversion to the Reformed faith of the young Duc de Thouars, the head of the great House of La Trémouille.

But the circumstance which perhaps operated most strongly in their favour was the attitude of the King, who, after betraying the Protestants, was now evidently bent upon betraying the League. Mayenne had been given the command of the army operating in Guienne, but Henri III sent him neither reinforcements nor money, which were diverted to his favourites Joyeuse and d'Épernon, who were prosecuting more or less innocuous offensives in Auvergne and Provence. When, notwithstanding the difficulties with which he had to contend, Mayenne did begin to gain a little ground, his Majesty sent him instructions to carry the war into Languedoc, with the intention of widening the breach between the Guises and their old rival Montmorency.

Guise, quick to penetrate this little manœuvre, despatched peremptory orders to his brother to remain where he was. He had better sit down before some place in Guienne which would require a long siege to reduce; make all kinds of difficulties: the weakness of

his forces, the scarcity of provisions, the strength of the town and so forth, and, finally, ask to be relieved of his command. But on no account was he to enter Languedoc.

The Maréchaux de Matignon and Biron, who were also operating against the King of Navarre, conducted their campaigns, doubtless in accordance with the royal instructions, in so desultory a fashion that very little damage was inflicted on the enemy, and in August 1586 the latter concluded a truce with Navarre, which lasted for the rest of the year. The truce was made the pretext for further negotiations, with the object of persuading the Béarnais to renounce the Reformed faith; but they were without result.

Henry III, however, was playing a dangerous game, and the irritation aroused among the more fanatical adherents of the League by the failure of their attempt to exterminate the heretics, and the highly suspicious manner in which their sovereign was acting, was increased by a tragic event which occurred in the first weeks of 1587. On February 18, the axe which for four months had been suspended over the fair head of the hapless Queen of Scotland at last fell; and Elizabeth was rid of the rival around whom so many conspiracies had centred.

The death of Mary Stuart gave the House of Lorraine a new martyr. "The Leaguers," writes L'Estoile, "shouted that she had died for the Catholic faith; and in this opinion they were adroitly maintained by the preachers, who canonised her daily in their sermons." Although so many years had passed since she had quitted the shores of France, her misfortunes had served to keep the memory of her grace and beauty green, and in Paris the news was followed by a perfect explosion of popular indignation. Nor did this indignation confine itself to denunciations of the "she-wolf of England" and the Huguenots, her allies. Many did not hesitate to declare that Henri III could have saved his sister-in-law from the block, if he had wished, and that the mission of



Pomponne de Bellièvre, who had been sent to England in the previous November to plead for Mary's life with Elizabeth, was merely a blind. In this, as the correspondence between the two Courts shows, a gross injustice was done to Henri; but the zealots were prepared to believe any charge, however monstrous, against a sovereign who, they were assured, was secretly conniving at the raising of the great army of *reiters*, *landsknechts*, and Swiss which would soon be pouring into France to aid the heretics.

The agents of the League redoubled their activities, and soon it was no longer the chiefs who urged on the crowd; it was the crowd who urged on the chiefs and grumbled at their inaction. Not only the Lorraine princes, but even the delegates from the sixteen quarters of Paris—the famous Council of the Sixteen—were outstripped by the impetuosity of their adherents. Conspiracies began to be set on foot, and it was resolved to seize and carry off the King as he was coming from Vincennes to the Louvre, when he would be accompanied by only a very few attendants. With some difficulty, the Sixteen persuaded the conspirators to renounce this project, but they wrote to the Lorraine princes, pressing them to take the offensive in Paris. To the great disappointment of his supporters, Guise, who had not shown himself in the capital since the preceding summer, did not make his appearance; but, about the beginning of March, Mayenne arrived in Paris. He was at once surrounded and besieged by entreaties to place himself at their head and to take action without delay, and his sister, the widowed Duchesse de Montpensier, joined her solicitations to those of the Sixteen. This princess, who was now the moving spirit of all the machinations of the Paris Leaguers, cherished the most implacable hatred against Henri III, and was willing to lend herself to the wildest schemes for his destruction. Some writers ascribe this to the fact that the King had rejected the duchess's advances, but it is more probable that she was



HENRY I DE LORRAINE, DUC DE GUISE, KNOWN AS "LE BALAFRÉ".

From a contemporary print.

one of those ladies whose reputation—it was, by the way, far from irreproachable—had suffered from his Majesty's malicious tongue. Any way, Henri III had few more bitter or more dangerous enemies.

The usually shrewd and cautious Mayenne eventually allowed himself to be persuaded, and a formidable conspiracy was organised, this time with the full approval of all the chiefs of the League in Paris. The Bastille, the Arsenal, the two Châtelets, the Palais de Justice, and the Temple were to be seized; the King was to be closely blockaded in the Louvre; the guards were to be overcome by force or starved into surrender, when the conspirators would enter the palace, slay all who ventured to oppose them, and secure the person of the King. The Chancellor, the First President of the Parlement, the Procurator-General, and Henri's counsellors were to be put to death, and the King given other counsellors; but no violence would be offered his Majesty, provided that he were willing to give an undertaking not to meddle any more with affairs of State. During the insurrection the streets surrounding the Louvre would be barricaded, with the twofold purpose of checking any egress from the palace and of preventing the robbers and vagabonds who infested the city, to the number, it was believed, of over 6,000, from taking advantage of the tumult to commit depredations.

Such are the details of the plot, according to the testimony of the spy Nicolas Poulain, a citizen of Paris who had succeeded in insinuating himself into the innermost circles of the League, and who repeatedly furnished the Court with most valuable information of its designs. Henri III profited by the warnings he had received to adopt various precautionary measures, which showed the Leaguers that their plans were discovered. Beyond this he did nothing, and Mayenne, who had hastened to apply to the Queen-mother for a safe-conduct so soon as he saw that the projected *coup d'état* had failed, was allowed to leave Paris unmolested.

When Mayenne went to take leave of the King, Henri III received him very graciously. "Ah! M. de Mayenne," said he, "how comes it that you are leaving your good Leaguers?" Mayenne, much embarrassed, replied that he did not understand the purport of his Majesty's question, and withdrew. Had d'Épernon been in Paris, he would probably not have escaped so easily, more particularly as he had recently laid an ambuscade for that nobleman, from which the latter had with difficulty escaped.

Guise expressed great indignation when he learned of what the Parisians had attempted without consulting him and in his absence. In reply to the reproaches which he addressed to them, the Sixteen promised to organise no further conspiracies without his knowledge; but, if they momentarily renounced their *coups de mains*, they worked more ardently than ever at the propaganda of the League. The clergy of Paris, and particularly the Jesuits, served them as recruiting-agents, and many priests went so far as to refuse absolution to those of their penitents who did not enrol themselves in the Holy Union. The great object of the Sixteen was to tighten the bonds which connected Paris with the other Leaguer towns, so as to form a kind of republican federation. For, since its formation in 1576, the character of the League had undergone a great change. Then it had been essentially aristocratic, whereas now the initiative had passed from the feudal element to the great municipalities, which seized greedily upon the hope of utilising the movement to recover their lost franchises and re-establish their mutilated constitutions. They accordingly hastened to enrol themselves in the League, of which the militia, or trained-bands of the towns, composed the principal force.<sup>1</sup>

Harassed by the impatience of the Paris Leaguers, tricked by the King, who was endeavouring to come to terms with Navarre behind his back, and with the

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin; Augustin Thierry, *Essai sur l'Histoire du Tiers État*.

Spanish yoke pressing heavily on his shoulders, Guise's position was becoming daily more difficult. In June, Henri III summoned him to Meaux, "that they might confer together concerning the public weal"; but the duke, disgusted apparently by his Majesty's proceedings, excused himself from obeying the royal command. Shortly afterwards, the summons was repeated, and this time Guise went, though very unwillingly, having a strong suspicion that the proposed conference was merely a pretext for his assassination. "Putting aside the doubt about my life," he writes to Mendoça, "I have determined to start [for Meaux] at once, shutting my eyes to all risks, since the safety of the Catholic religion and the general welfare of Christendom is concerned. I am going, therefore, with all diligence to make the King speak out plainly, and, by depriving him of every excuse for his pernicious designs, to make him embark again in the war, wherein you may believe we shall not fail to show the necessary courage, industry and intelligence."

The King and the chief of the League met at Meaux on the first day of July, and Henri earnestly pressed Guise to avert the threatened foreign invasion, by consenting to accord some terms of peace to the Huguenots; at the same time, offering the duke great advantages for himself and his family and friends. But Guise knew that peace would mean his ruin and that of his relatives—he had said, in a letter to Mayenne, that "they had for ever espoused the cuirass"—and he was inflexible. The King yielded, and promised to place himself at the head of the army of reserve and defend the line of the Loire, to prevent the junction of the German invaders with the Huguenots; while Guise defended the eastern frontier, and Joyeuse held Navarre in check in the West.

Henri III was fully resolved to oppose the junction of the Huguenots with their foreign auxiliaries, which could not fail to result in the Reformers obtaining very

decisive successes. But he was equally determined to betray Guise. He had promised the duke from forty to fifty *compagnies d'ordonnance* and 4,000 Swiss, but all that the latter, despite the most urgent representations, was able to obtain were half a dozen *compagnies* and two regiments of infantry; while Joyeuse, on the other hand, was provided with a numerous and splendidly equipped army. The King's hope was that the duchy of Lorraine would become the principal theatre of hostilities, and that Guise, hastening to the succour of the patrimony of his House, would, notwithstanding the inferiority of his forces, with his usual rashness, give battle to the enemy, and be defeated and killed. He would, however, no doubt succeed in inflicting heavy losses on the invaders, which would prevent them advancing into France. Then, with Joyeuse holding Navarre in check, the King, posted on the Loire, at the head of the powerful army of reserve, would be master of the situation. His Majesty's hopes, however, were not destined to materialise.

While Guise, with the feeble force which had been placed under his orders, awaited the invading army, Joyeuse, at the head of an imposing array, which comprised a great number of nobles and gentlemen, had commenced operations in the south-west. He had been enjoined by the King to remain on the defensive, and to content himself with holding the Protestants in check; but, carried away by his desire to distinguish himself, he disregarded his master's orders, and, after capturing several places on the Sèvre, marched against Navarre and attacked him in the plain of Coutras, on the borders of Saintonge and Perigord, a few miles north of Libourne. The result was a complete victory for the young king—the first which the Huguenots had gained in a pitched battle in twenty-five years of warfare. Joyeuse himself, 400 gentlemen, and 2,000 soldiers were killed, and an immense booty fell into the hands of the Protestants, whose loss was insignificant,



Complete though the victory was, it had no important results. Navarre has been blamed for not pressing on to join the advancing Germans, when he might have fallen with superior forces on the King, or extorted a favourable peace by a bold march on Paris. Perhaps, as Agrippe d'Aubigné asserts, his desire to lay his laurels at the feet of his mistress, the Comtesse de Grammont—"la belle Corisande"—was stronger than ambition. Perhaps, he considered that it would be impolitic to humiliate Henri III further, lest he should drive him into the arms of the Guises. But the most probable explanation is that his army, largely composed as it was of levies from the neighbouring districts, Poitou, Saintonge, and the Angoumois, was not equipped for a prolonged campaign and that it would have been impossible to keep it together.

The auxiliary army, on its side, had done nothing to encourage the Huguenots to attempt a junction with it. Its fate was already practically decided.

It had been expected that this army, from whose assistance the Protestants expected so much, and which was arousing the greatest apprehensions amongst the Catholics, would number close upon 40,000 men, and that John Casimir of Bavaria would take the command. In point of fact, it did not exceed from 23,000 to 25,000, consisting of some 5,000 *reiters*, about the same number of *lands-knechts*, from 10,000 to 12,000 Swiss from the Protestant cantons, and a small body of French under the young Duc de Bouillon; while John Casimir, unwilling to give offence to his neighbour, the Duke of Lorraine, did not take the field in person. In his absence, the command was shared between Fabien von Dohna, who commanded the Germans, and the Duc de Bouillon. The former was a brave soldier, but quite unfitted for an important post; the latter altogether without experience. They were assisted in their deliberations by Clervant, who commanded the Swiss, and John Casimir's French secretary, La Huguerie, who

was subsequently suspected, and not without reason, of being in the pay of the Guises.

Towards the end of August, the invaders crossed the frontier of Lorraine, near Blamont, and began mercilessly ravaging the country between the Sarre and the Moselle, but without succeeding in drawing the Duke of Lorraine or Guise into an engagement. Then, in the third week in September, they entered Champagne, crossed the Seine above Châtillon and the Yonne, and directed their march towards the Loire, leaving a black trail of desolation in their wake. But they were already demoralised by the excesses in which they had been permitted to indulge, by the quarrels between the different nationalities, and by disputes between their leaders, and weakened by sickness and desertion.

Henri III, strongly posted on the line of the Loire, barred the passage of the river, and refused to be convinced that the invasion was directed, not against him, but against the League, upon which they turned towards the Beauce, with the intention of resting and reorganising their forces.

Since the invading army crossed the frontier, Guise had been marching parallel with it, awaiting an opportunity to attack. At Montargis, on October 26, he learned that the Germans had just arrived at Vimory, only a league distant. Although the surrounding country intersected by hedges and thickets, was very favourable to surprises, the enemy had not taken the precaution to post sentries, and, aided by this circumstance and by the darkness of the night, his infantry succeeded in penetrating into the heart of the village before the alarm was given. Many of the Germans were killed in their beds before they could seize their weapons, but eventually Dohna managed to assemble several squadrons of *reiters*, with which he charged the assailants and drove them out of the place. He had lost, however, over 800 men.

This affair, though not of great importance in itself,

hastened the dissolution of the foreign army. The Germans declared that they were being led to their destruction, and when, with great difficulty, they had been appeased, it was the turn of the Swiss to mutiny. They had been enlisted, they said, under false pretences, as it was never their intention to bear arms against the King of France. Henri III took advantage of their discontent and opened negotiations with them.

Towards the end of November, Dohna established his headquarters at Auneau, but, though he occupied the town, the château, which guarded the approach to it, remained in the hands of the governor. On the night of November 24-25, Guise profited by this circumstance to make his way into Auneau and seize the gates; and the Germans found themselves caught in a trap. Many of them succeeded in effecting their escape by jumping from the walls, but more than 2,000 were either cut down or made prisoners, while all their baggage, and the plunder they had accumulated since they entered France, fell into the hands of the victors.

Henri III appears to have learned of this new success on the part of Guise with very mixed feelings, since he dismissed the officer who brought him the news without making him any present. However, he hastened to conclude a convention with the Swiss, by which they were permitted to return to their cantons and furnished with provisions and money. As for the Germans, who, disheartened by their reverses and the defection of their allies, lost no time in turning their faces homewards, d'Épernon, who was entrusted with the pursuit, conducted it with very little ardour, and finally, instead of destroying the enemy, which he might easily have done, accorded them an honourable capitulation and leave to retire to their own country. The same liberty to leave France was granted to the Huguenots who had taken part in the invasion. Guise, however, but little disposed to clemency towards a race whom he cordially hated, affected to believe that the convention with the Germans

only held good so long as they were on French soil, and, the moment they had crossed the frontier, he and the Marquis de Pont-à-Mousson, son of the Duke of Lorraine, fell upon them, killed a great many, and continued to harass them almost as far as Geneva. Afterwards the two princes ravaged the county of Montbéliard, where they burned over one hundred villages, in order to avenge on the Calvinist count of that name the devastation of Lorraine.

Henri III returned to Paris at the conclusion of the campaign to hear the streets ringing with his rival's name. Guise's successes over the Germans, and particularly his pitiless reprisals, had established him as the champion of Catholicism. The actions at Vimory and Auneau were magnified until they assumed the character of great victories, and were celebrated in song and pamphlet and sermon. The Pope, at Philip II's request, sent the duke a sword of honour, and Parma a helmet engraved with a complimentary inscription. On the other hand, the zealots were exasperated at what they considered the misplaced leniency of the King towards the heretics who had so ruthlessly pillaged and devastated some of the fairest provinces of France, and did not hesitate to declare that he had connived at the invasion of his own realm.

## CHAPTER XXXI

Insolence of the Duchesse de Montpensier towards the royal authority—The Paris clergy, at her instigation, indulge in violent denunciations of the King—The Saint-Séverin pictures—The arrest of Jean Prévost and two other preachers leads to a dangerous riot—The Leaguer princes present fresh demands to Henri III—And no longer trouble to conceal their alliance with Philip II—Henri III summons 4,000 Swiss from Lagny and quarters them in the Faubourg Saint-Denis—Consternation of the Paris Leaguers, who entreat Guise to come to their succour—Guise and the Armada—Henri III sends Bellièvre to the duke to forbid him to come to Paris—Guise ignores the royal command and arrives in the capital—“*Percutiam pastorem et dispergentur oves*”—Henri III resolves to have Guise assassinated at the Louvre—A dramatic moment—Escape of the duke—The King secretly introduces the Swiss and the French Guards into Paris—The Day of the Barricades—Conduct of Guise—Interview between the duke and Catherine de' Medici—Flight of Henri III from Paris.

WHILE the Protestants and Catholics were in arms, the League had continued its propaganda with unabated vigour, and had swept into the meshes of its far-flung net recruits from every quarter of France and from every class in the community. In the capital, the fiery Duchesse de Montpensier was the soul of the movement; but, though her insolence towards the royal authority passed all bounds, for some time no attempt was made to restrain her. “The King knew well how she played the queen in Paris, what manœuvres, machinations, and seditions she practised there, and how she gave money to Boucher, Lancestre, Pegouat, Prévost, Auberi, and other curés and preachers, with promises of bishoprics, abbeys, and other great benefices, and even went so far as to boast that she had more advanced the cause of the League by the mouths of her preachers than her brothers had done with all their forces, arms, and armies.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

The duchess's preachers vied with one another in the violence of their sermons, and incriminated the acts, the morals and the orthodoxy of the King. Henri III, in the hope of inducing them to moderate their language, exiled Poncet, curé of Saint-Pierre-des-Arcis, for some months; but his punishment appears to have had little effect upon the other offenders, and the curé of Saint-Benoît, Boucher, actually dared to accuse the King from his pulpit of having caused a preacher at Lyons to be made away with, in order to silence his tongue.

Towards the end of June 1587, Madame de Montpensier conceived the idea of exploiting the execution of Mary Stuart in a more effective manner than heretofore; and, at her instigation, Jean Prévost, curé of Saint-Séverin, exhibited, in the cemetery of his parish, an immense picture, in which were depicted, in a progression of moving scenes, the horrible tortures which Elizabeth was popularly supposed to be in the habit of inflicting upon her Catholic subjects. It is easy to imagine the effect produced by these pictures on the fanatical and excitable populace of Paris. Every day crowds flocked to Saint-Séverin, where, without doubt, Boucher, in his capacity as cicerone, explained and commented upon the gruesome scenes represented, telling his audience that the fate of these unhappy English Catholics would assuredly be theirs, if Henri of Navarre should ever ascend the throne. Nothing but an implacable war could avert those evils. But how could they hope that the war would be prosecuted *à outrance*, when the King himself secretly favoured the heretics?

Henri III permitted this picture to remain exposed for more than a fortnight, and, when he at last decided to have it removed, ordered that it should be done at night. But, at the beginning of September, he resolved to imprison Jean Prévost and two other preachers.

At the news of their arrest, the Leaguers rushed to arms and sounded the tocsin. Some of them occupied

the bridge which connected the University quarter with the city and the right bank of the Seine, while others fortified themselves in the house of a notary named Hatte, who was one of the chief instigators of the riot, in the Carrefour Saint-Séverin. The Civil Lieutenant, Séguier, at the head of a strong force of police, endeavoured to force the door, but was repulsed; and it was only after the King's guards had been called out that the disturbance was quelled. D'Épernon and Villeroi urged Henri III to take vigorous measures, and to have the ringleaders hanged; but timid counsels, as usual, prevailed, and nothing worse happened to the offenders than temporary banishment from Paris.

In this affair the League learned its strength, and Guise's successes at Vimory and Auneau served to increase its audacity. The leniency shown by Henri III to the invaders of his realm redoubled its hatred and suspicions of a king who continued to defy public opinion; while d'Épernon, who had failed to destroy the retreating Germans and was generally regarded as a partisan of Henri of Navarre, was almost as much detested as his royal master. He had lately received the government of Normandy, a post usually reserved for a Son of France or a Prince of the Blood. This signal favour was denounced as a new proof of the King's perfidy.

As a pretext for remaining in arms, Guise, on his return from the pursuit of the Germans, had laid siege to Jametz. At the end of January, the Leaguer princes met at Nancy, and, as the result of the deliberations that took place there, drew up and presented a new Request to the King, inviting him to declare himself more openly in favour of the League; to degrade all officers of the Crown suspected by it, of which a list should be furnished him, whatever their grandeur and dignity (this article was obviously aimed at d'Épernon); to accept the Council of Trent; to establish the Inquisition in the principal towns, and to put to death all heretic prisoners who should refuse to recant. This



last article was intended to alienate Henri of Navarre from his royal brother-in-law.

The King promised to consider these demands, and, meanwhile, endeavoured to bring Guise to a more accommodating frame of mind, entreating him to break with Spain and promising him, in return, all kinds of benefits, "with a world of extraordinary offers," which Guise, in a letter to Mendoça, compares to those made by Satan to Our Lord in the wilderness. "And I trust," he adds, "that I too shall be succoured by good angels."<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic princes, indeed, no longer concealed their alliance with Philip II and openly favoured his projects. The King of Spain was preparing to despatch the mighty fleet which was to embark in the Netherlands the troops of Parma and throw them on the coasts of England. It was the grand project of Philip's reign, the successful execution of which would deal a mortal blow, not only to Elizabeth and her Church, but to Protestantism throughout Europe. The Lorraines lent themselves with enthusiasm to the furtherance of a work which would pave the way for the triumph of their own cause; and Aumale had already seized upon the majority of the strong places in Picardy, in order to secure for the Invincible Armada the ports and the resources of that province. Henri III, who was following with growing uneasiness the formidable preparations of Spain, did not wish to leave the ports where the expedition might be able to land at Philip's disposal, and, on learning of the death of the Prince de Condé, the titular Governor of Picardy, he lost no time in nominating, as his successor, the Duc de Nevers, who had now entirely abandoned the League. But Aumale refused to surrender the places he had seized.

Early in the spring of 1588, the Paris Leaguers, emboldened by the feebleness of the King and urged on

<sup>1</sup> Bouillé.

by Madame de Montpensier, had recommenced their plottings; an attempt was made to assassinate d'Épernon, and towards the end of April Henri III was informed that there was a conspiracy on foot to introduce into the town 500 or 600 horse, led by Aumale or Guise. He therefore reinforced his guards and summoned from Lagny 4,000 Swiss, whom he quartered in the Faubourg Saint-Denis.

The news that the Swiss were so close at hand created the utmost consternation amongst the Paris Leaguers. They believed that d'Épernon had at last induced the King to punish their insolent defiance of his authority, and they pressed Guise, with entreaties and even with threats, to come to their succour. The duke answered reassuringly and sent some of his officers, who slipped into the town one by one; but he did not come himself. He was, in fact, resolved not to precipitate the *coup d'état* he meditated before the decisive moment had arrived; and that moment he was not himself free to choose. He was obliged to await the signal from the King of Spain.

In March 1588, Philip II's agent, the Aragonese Moreo, had been sent to Soissons, where Guise then was, and had remitted to him a sum of 300,000 gold crowns, at the same time informing him that his Catholic Majesty had fixed the following May for the commencement of his crusade against the English heretics. Early in May, the Armada would set sail, and simultaneously Aumale was to render himself master of Boulogne, in order to be able to offer the Spanish fleet a port of revictualling during the war with England, and a place of disembarkation for the Spanish troops should Philip decide to deal with Henri III after settling accounts with Elizabeth; while Guise would seize Paris and prosecute the civil war with the utmost vigour, to prevent France from intervening in the death-struggle which his ally was waging against the English.

Various delays, however, prevented the Armada from

sailing until May 28, and Guise and Aumale found themselves obliged to anticipate its departure. The latter, thanks to the vigilance and courage of Bernet, d'Épernon's lieutenant, failed in his criminal attempt upon Boulogne, and was obliged to confine himself to blockading the place and intercepting the reinforcements which d'Épernon endeavoured to throw into it. But Guise, as we shall presently see, was more successful.

In the first days of May, Henri III, informed by the spy Poulain of the urgent summonses which Guise was receiving from his confederates in the capital, sent Bellièvre to Soissons to tell the duke that, though the King did not doubt his attachment to his person and refused to credit the rumours that were being circulated to his detriment, he considered it advisable that, for the present, he should postpone coming to Paris. But, at the same time, Henry was so imprudent as to permit d'Épernon, the one man upon whose fidelity and courage he could rely, to leave for Normandy to assume the government of that province.

In response to the royal message, Guise declared that his services to the Crown had been very ill requited; that his reputation was dearer to him than his life, and that, even if those who were Protestants at heart continued to calumniate him, it would not deter him from doing whatever his zeal for his country and his faith might dictate. On the 5th, Bellièvre returned with this very ambiguous answer, and two days later Poulain told the King that Guise was coming to Paris. "But I have forbidden it!" exclaimed Henry. "Nevertheless, he is coming," rejoined the spy.

Poulain was only too correctly informed. At nine o'clock on the evening of the 8th, Guise, who feared that, if he delayed any longer, the Paris Leaguers might be tempted to take matters into their own hands and perhaps compromise by their precipitation the success of his plans, left Soissons, accompanied only by eight of his gentlemen and the merchant Brigard, a delegate of

the Parisians, and set out for the capital. The party rode hard all night, and, avoiding Bellièvre, who was on his way to Soissons to convey to Guise a formal prohibition to enter Paris, arrived at the Porte Saint-Denis about one o'clock the following afternoon.

The duke at once proceeded to the lodging of the Queen-mother at the Couvent des Filles Repenties, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and requested her to procure him an audience of the King. Catherine received him very courteously, but told him that he would have done better to choose another time. To which Guise replied that his enemies were blackening his character, and that he had come to defend himself. Catherine said no more, and offered to conduct him herself to the King; but, while the duke was conversing with her ladies, she summoned one of her gentlemen, Luigi Davila, brother of the historian, and sent him in all haste to Henri III to inform him of Guise's arrival in Paris, and that she was bringing him presently to the Louvre.

It may well be asked why Guise, coming to Paris against the express wish of the King, to take command of the Leaguers and begin the decisive struggle, should have been so ready to venture alone into the stronghold of his enemies. Probably, he desired to await news of the Armada and to gain time, by presenting himself as the mediator between Henri III and the League. But, whatever advantage he may have expected to derive was certainly not worth the risk he was running, and his conduct can only be explained by the fact that he was as reckless of danger as in the days of his first campaigns. "He threw himself impetuously into the Louvre as he had advanced alone into the midst of the Huguenots at Saint-Yrieux or the *reiters* at Dormans."<sup>1</sup> And his rashness came very near to costing him his life.

Henri III was in his cabinet with Villequier, Bellièvre and the Abbé del Bene, a son of the Ambassador of Savoy and an intimate friend of d'Épernon, when Cathe-

<sup>1</sup> Forneron.

rine's message was delivered to him. For a while he sat in silence, with his elbows on a table and his face hidden in his hands, and then, having asked Davila a few questions, desired him to tell the Queen-mother in private that he begged her to delay her visit to the Louvre as long as possible. When Davila had departed, he sent for the Corsican Alfonso Ornano.

"M. de Guise has arrived," said he, "although I sent him word not to come. Were you in my place, what would you do?"

"Sire," answered the Corsican, "do you count M. de Guise your friend or your enemy?"

The King answered by an impatient gesture, and Ornano continued:—

"I think I comprehend your Majesty's meaning, and, that being so, if you will honour me with the commission, you need give yourself no further trouble. I will lay his head at your feet to-day, or I will bring him to you in any spot you care to appoint."

Henri turned to his other advisers and requested their opinion.

"*Percutiam pastorem et dispergentur oves*," murmured the Abbé del Bene.

The King rose and left the room, without having arrived at any decision, and went into Queen Louise's chamber, where he intended to receive Guise. Behind the door of the Queen's chamber was a closet, and in this he concealed Laugnac, the Captain of the *Quarante-cinq*, with five of his men.

Scarcely had he done so, when Catherine arrived in her sedan-chair, with the duke, wearing a white satin doublet and black mantle, walking bareheaded by her side, holding in his hand his hat decorated with a large green plume. The news of his arrival, so eagerly awaited by his partisans, had already spread, and the streets were thronged with a rapturous crowd, the sound of whose cheering floated through the windows of the palace, where Henri

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xiv. 27.

sat waiting, his eyes straying from time to time to the door of the closet where his Gascons lay hid. Passing through the courtyard, where the French Guards were drawn up, and ascending the grand staircase lined by the Swiss, Guise presently entered the royal presence and bowed low before the King.

"What brings you here?" cried Henri, livid with anger.

The duke answered that he had come to clear himself of the charges brought against him, and to assure his Majesty personally of his fidelity and affection.

"I told you not to come," said the King.

"I did not understand," replied Guise, "that your Majesty would find my arrival so displeasing."

Henri, turning to Bellièvre, inquired if he had conveyed such a message to M. de Guise. Bellièvre was endeavouring to explain, when the King interrupted him. "That is enough," said he, and, addressing Guise, he told him that the best proof he could give of his innocence was to see that his presence in Paris was followed by no disturbances.

A single word from the King would have brought Laugnac and his men from their hiding-place and terminated the quarrel between the rivals, and Henri seemed to be seeking, in a fictitious anger, the courage to pronounce the fatal order. As for Guise, he was already conscious, from the pale faces and anxious looks of those about him, that his life hung by a thread. Nevertheless, he preserved his composure and went forward to salute the Queen; while Catherine drew her son into the embrasure of a window, and, pointing to the crowd congregated outside the palace awaiting the duke's return, besought him not to commit an act which would transform it in a moment into a raging mob thirsting for its sovereign's blood.

Henri wavered, and Guise, seizing the instant of indecision, blandly inquired whether he had his Majesty's leave to retire. Before the King could reply, Catherine

eagerly assented, and the duke, saluting their Majesties, withdrew from the room, passed through the ranks of the guards, crossed the drawbridge, and found himself in the streets, safe and in the midst of his adoring Parisians. The crowd, who had watched their idol enter the stronghold of his enemies with no little uneasiness, on seeing him reappear, pale and fatigued, but debonair and smiling as ever, broke into frenzied acclamations. "Long live Guise! Long live the pillar of the Church! Hosanna to the Son of David!" they shouted. From every balcony flowers rained down upon him; people pressed around him to kiss the hem of his cloak, and one old woman actually brought her rosary to be consecrated by his touch. Truly, as Henri III had once bitterly remarked, "if he were the King of France, M. de Guise was the King of Paris."

Next morning, Guise again visited the Louvre, but this time he came accompanied by an escort of 400 gentlemen. That day, a number of officers and soldiers in the service of the Guises succeeded in making their way into the town, and held themselves in readiness for any emergency. The King in vain sent directions to the municipal authorities to keep a close watch on the gates and inns; the complicity of the populace protected the intruders.

Nothing would have been easier for Henri III than to punish the rebels, and to render himself master, by a single cast of the net, of all the Leaguers shut up in Paris. He had close at hand the 4,000 Swiss, the French Guards, and other troops, commanded by experienced captains, like the Maréchal d'Aumont, Biron, and Crillon; while d'Épernon, with a considerable force, was at Rouen and could have speedily reached the capital. He possessed, besides, that legal authority which ensures the devotion of the soldier. But he was, as usual, a prey to indecision, oscillating between fear and the desire for vengeance, and wasted nearly the whole of the 11th. Then, towards evening, declaring that he was resolved to be master in



his own capital, he gave instructions that a house-to-house visitation should be instituted, with the object of discovering and expelling the strangers in Paris; and, to provide the force necessary to support the police, in the event of their meeting with resistance, resolved to introduce into the town the Swiss and the French Guards quartered in the Faubourg Saint-Denis. Such a step was, of course, a violation of the privilege which Paris enjoyed of guarding itself.

But, while adopting these strong measures, the King proceeded to render them useless, by sending orders to the soldiers that they were not, under pain of death, to make use of their weapons. He apparently could not bring himself to believe that his troops might be attacked, and pretended to be unaware that, apart from his citizen adherents, Guise had at hand a number of seasoned soldiers. He wished at all cost to prevent a combat so near his own palace, and imagined that the mere presence of a strong military force would suffice to prevent any disturbance.

At five o'clock in the morning of the 12th, the Royalist sheriff Lugolz opened the Porte Saint-Honoré to the Swiss and the French Guards, who made their way in silence to the Cemetery of the Innocents. There the different companies learned their destination, and marched through the town, which awoke to the sound of fife and drum. One French company, under the command of Michel du Guast—a personage who was to figure in a sinister *rôle* at Blois some months later—was stationed under the Petit-Châtelet, at the head of the Petit-Pont; another, commanded by the Sieur de Marivaux, occupied the Pont Saint-Michel. Three Swiss companies were quartered in the Marché-Neuf, in the centre of the Cité. These troops were under the command of Crillon. Four Swiss companies and three of the French Guards occupied the Place de Grève. The rest remained in the Cemetery of the Innocents. By some inexplicable oversight, however, the troops neglected

to secure the important strategical position of the Place Maubert, between the University and the river.

The soldiers believed that the town was in their hands. The Swiss in the Marché-Neuf seized all the edibles they could lay their hands on; the French Guards bantered the citizens, who were peeping at them from behind their shutters, and bade them see to it that there were clean sheets on their beds, as they were coming to sleep in them that night; and some of them began to take liberties with the women who were passing by.

The totally unexpected appearance of the troops at first excited the utmost consternation. The warlike zeal of the citizens dropped to zero, and there can be no doubt that, had the King possessed the energy and resolution to take advantage of the surprise he had sprung upon them, he could have arrested Guise and all the leaders of the Paris League and crushed the movement in the capital at a single blow. But he did nothing; the troops received no orders, except to remain where they were; no one was arrested; no one was even threatened; and gradually the courage of the citizens returned.

The University quarter, where the most ardent adherents of the League were to be found, was the first to move. The preachers raised the scholars; a doctor of theology, Péginaud, who had assumed helmet and cuirass, exhorted his pupils to fight bravely for the liberty of the town and for their religion; the fiery Boucher preached the holy war to the students of the Collège de Fortet, and a number of them took up arms, as did many scholars from the Collège de Clermont. The Leaguers occupied the Carrefour Saint-Séverin, which closed the access to the Place Maubert and commanded the entrance to the University, and forced the piquet which Crillon had posted at the entrance to the Faubourg Saint-Séverin to retire.

The insurrection spread rapidly. The inhabitants

of the Rue Neuve Notre-Dame and the Rue de la Calandre, in the Cité, stretched chains across the streets and began erecting barricades, which soon became ramparts of the most formidable character. Behind the barricades and at the windows of the houses arquebusiers were posted, and the women and children armed themselves with stones. In a surprisingly short time the whole Cité was covered with barricades, and the University quarter and the rest of the town hastened to follow suit. Guise did not leave his hôtel, but the officers and soldiers whom he had introduced into Paris mingled with the pioneers, directing their work. The Comte de Brissac and a Leaguer captain named Saint-Paul assumed the command of the insurgents. The former had placed himself at the head of the contingent from the University, and it was he who had caused the Carrefour Saint-Séverin to be occupied and who inspired the most important movements.

The soldiers had made merry over the first defensive preparations; but soon they found themselves completely hemmed in by the barricades which were springing up on all sides. The several companies, posted at different points, were like so many isolated and beleaguered garrisons. The inhabitants of the Rue Saint-Denis intercepted the provisions which were being sent to the troops in the Cemetery of the Innocents, and drank the wine under the noses of the thirsty soldiers. The people of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine seized a supply of gunpowder which was on its way to the Place de Grève. The whole town had turned against the King.

Henri III, who had been counting upon an easy success, was utterly disconcerted when the news of this formidable insurrection reached him. D'Épernon was absent, and the timid counsellors who surrounded the King united to dissuade him from adopting vigorous measures. Instead, therefore, of giving orders to the troops to quell the revolt, which, aided by the cannon of the Bastille,

they might still have done with comparative ease, and probably without much bloodshed, he left them standing in their ranks, weary and hungry, surrounded by the furious mob, which had begun to assail them with volleys of stones and other missiles. Soon after midday, the inhabitants of the Cité, vowing that they would not permit the troops to pass the night in their quarter, called upon the Swiss in the Marché-Neuf to withdraw, which they consented to do. The French company of Marivaux on the Pont Saint-Michel, finding itself attacked from the side of the University, was obliged to capitulate and rejoined the Swiss; while Brissac occupied the Petit-Châtelet and drove Du Guast's French Guards from their position at the head of the Petit-Pont.

Meantime, the citizens had sent a deputation to the King begging him to recall his troops; but, before the order came, an arrangement had been arrived at, and the French and Swiss companies massed in the Marché Neuf began to retire, the barricades opening to allow them to pass. Unfortunately, the Swiss, suspicious of the intentions of the populace, had refused to extinguish the matches of their arquebuses; a piece went off, probably by accident, and a citizen fell dead. In a moment, the Swiss were assailed by a volley of arquebus-shots from the roofs and windows of the surrounding houses. More than sixty of them fell, while their comrades threw down their weapons and dropped on their knees, showing their rosaries and crying out: "*Bonne France! bon Catholique!*" The firing thereupon ceased, but the attitude of the populace continued very threatening; while the situation of the troops stationed in the Place de Grève and in the Innocents might at any moment become equally perilous.

Nothing, meanwhile, had been seen of Guise. In the early hours of the morning—that is to say, soon after the troops had entered the city, when the King fondly believed that the day was his—he had sent Bellièvre to the duke to persuade him to leave Paris, promising that,

if he consented, none of his partisans should be molested. Guise had declined to leave the city, but he gave an undertaking not to go farther than the street in which his hôtel was situated; and this promise he duly observed, though there can be little doubt that he was in constant communication with the insurgents and directed their operations. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the King was persuaded to make an attempt to rescue the Swiss; and Biron was sent to Guise, no longer to urge him to leave Paris, but to beg him to intervene between the troops and the populace. To his Sovereign's request Guise readily assented. He left his hôtel, dressed in a white doublet, with a little cane in his hand, and went first to the Innocents, saluted from street to street by the acclamations of the multitude intoxicated with its triumph.

Guise reached the Cemetery of the Innocents and delivered the garrison which was imprisoned there; then he set at liberty the troops in the Place de Grève; and, finally, proceeded to the Marché-Neuf, where the Swiss, although they had laid down their arms, were still standing as they had stood since early morning. He praised the courage shown by the citizens, and begged them to give him the Swiss; and the people, "their anger appeased by the mere sound of his voice," consented. Then he ordered Saint-Paul to conduct the Swiss and the French Guards back to the King, which he did, walking in front of the vanquished troops with a switch in his hand, as though he were leading a flock of sheep. Having seen the soldiers safely on their way back to their discomfited master, Guise returned to his hôtel, amid acclamations even louder than had greeted his appearance. Voices here and there cried: "To Rheims! We must carry Monsieur to Rheims!" The duke feigned to be displeased at the enthusiasm of his admirers. "It is enough, my friends. It is too much," said he: "Now let me hear you cry, '*Vive le Roi!*'"

The battle was at an end; but peace was not made.

The Court and the League remained under arms. Henri III stationed his troops around the Louvre, instead of ordering them to leave Paris ; while the Parisians pushed their barricades right up to the approaches of the château. The night passed in the midst of alarms. The citizens, fearing that the troops might attempt a sortie, lighted up their houses and kept watch and ward. In the Louvre, where it was believed that an attack might at any moment be delivered, no one thought of retiring, and the King and his gentlemen stood for a whole hour with their drawn swords in their hands.

On Friday morning, May 13, Catherine decided to open negotiations with the chief of the League. She accordingly entered her litter, and, followed by Pinard, one of the Secretaries of State, crossed the drawbridge and set out for the Hôtel de Guise. Her coming was evidently not unexpected, for the guards at the barricades greeted her respectfully and opened them sufficiently to let her pass. She found Guise, undecided and anxious, holding a council of war with his sister Madame de Montpensier and Brissac. He received her very coldly, and, comprehending that she had come to propose a new Treaty of Nemours, gave her nothing but evasive answers. It appeared to the Queen-mother that Guise would be satisfied with nothing short of Henri III's abdication, or, at any rate, with his acceptance of a position which would strip him of everything but the merest shadow of authority and transfer all real power into the hands of the Lorraine princes.

The discussion lasted until far into the afternoon, when Catherine, after a brief conversation in a low voice with Pinard, despatched the Secretary of State to the Louvre, ostensibly to obtain the King's authority for her to accept Guise's terms, but in reality to warn her son that flight was the only chance that remained to him of saving his crown. Pinard departed, she resumed the discussion with all the patience of an Italian and all the obstinacy of an old woman, determined to gain as

much time as possible. About six o'clock, Maineville, one of Guise's gentlemen, entered abruptly and whispered in his master's ear. "*Me voilà mort, Madame!*" cried the duke angrily. "While you have been amusing me here, the King is going to ruin me."<sup>1</sup>

Henri III, in fact, whether influenced by the warning that the Queen-mother had sent him from the Hôtel de Guise, or because he feared that a furious mob of friars, priests and scholars which had gathered in the University quarter was about to attack the Louvre, had decided to save himself by flight. All the gates of Paris were held by the Leaguers, with the exception of one opening on to the garden of the Tuileries, of which the King himself kept the key. About five o'clock in the afternoon, accompanied by his chief counsellors and a few attendants, he sauntered, "with as cheerful a countenance as on the brightest day of his life,"<sup>2</sup> to look at his stables, which adjoined the gardens, as he was often in the habit of doing. And there, mounting a horse, and followed by as many of his suite as could find anything to ride, some of them unbooted, in silken hose and robes of office—for the King had concealed his intention until the very last moment—he set out for Chartres.

The guards at the Porte de Nesle fired across the river at the motley cavalcade as it passed along the opposite bank, and the people shouted taunts and insults. On the hill of Chaillot, Henri turned in his saddle and looked back at the city he was leaving. "Ungrateful town!" cried he: "I have loved you more than my own wife." And he swore that he would not return to it, except through the breach.

But he was never to enter Paris again!

<sup>1</sup> Davila.

<sup>2</sup> Cheverny, *Mémoires*.



## CHAPTER XXXII

Error committed by Guise in allowing Henri III to escape him—His measures to consolidate the results of the insurrection—Municipal revolution in Paris—Henri III at Chartres—His letter to the provincial governors and corporations on the subject of the recent disturbances—Audacious version of the affair issued by Guise—Efforts made to induce the King to return to his capital—Procession of Capuchins, Feuillants and White Penitents to Chartres—Insolent demands of the League—Abject surrender of Henri III—Guise appointed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom—D'Épernon at Angoulême—His heroic defence of the château against the Leaguers—Defeat of the Spanish Armada.

It would be interesting to know what was the true impression of Guise on learning of the flight of the King. Was he really as surprised and angry as he appeared to be? Did he repent of not having followed up the victory of the previous day by endeavouring to secure Henri's person, or, at any rate, of not having kept him a close prisoner in the Louvre? We can only conjecture; but it seems most probable that he was a good deal relieved to hear that the King was at liberty, since any personal violence or constraint to which the Sovereign was subjected could not fail to produce a reaction in his favour, and he calculated that, even when free, Henri would be only too ready to treat, and that the States-General would sanction the abasement of the King of France before the victor of the barricades. What, however, is certain, in the light of subsequent events, is that the duke committed a grave error in allowing Henri to escape him, and that it would have been well for him had he been of the opinion of the Duke of Parma, who, on being informed of the course of events in Paris, observed that

“he who draws the sword against his prince ought immediately to throw away the scabbard.”

However that may be, Guise laboured with vigour and intelligence to consolidate the results of the insurrection which had placed Paris in his hands. The evening of the flight of the King, he passed through the town on foot, talking familiarly with the citizens, without losing any of that dignity which was natural to him. Then, having given orders for the barricades to be dismantled, he proceeded to the Palais de Justice, to visit the First President of the Parlement and the Presidents of the Grande Chambre and urge them not to interrupt the course of justice, but “to accommodate themselves to the time.” The First President, Achille de Harlay, who, although a staunch Catholic, was very hostile to the League, spoke to the duke about his “dangerous proceedings” and the responsibility he was incurring with a candour and firmness which appear to have disconcerted his visitor not a little, telling him that “it was a great pity when the servant chased away the master.” However, the following day, on the express invitation of the Queen-mother, the magistrates resumed their duties.

The presence of Catherine in Paris was singularly favourable to the designs of Guise, and served to mitigate the gravity of the situation. For so long as the mother of the Valois—“*la grande negociatrice*”—did not quit the capital, no one believed in a definite rupture between the King and the League.

By the 14th there remained no trace of the insurrection, and order had been completely re-established—a circumstance which proved how strong was the organisation of the League in Paris. The Sunday, which the *Politiques* and those suspected of heresy had been awaiting with great uneasiness, passed quite tranquilly, and, for the first time for many months, the preachers recommended order and moderation to their flocks.

Although Guise had little fear that Henri III would

make an attempt to regain his position, he was determined to leave nothing to chance, and accordingly lost no time in occupying the Bastille, the Arsenal, the Château of Vincennes, Charenton, and other points of strategic importance in and around the capital, and in writing to Mendoza that "if bad counsels continued to prevail with the King, he counted on the King his master." Meanwhile, a municipal revolution had taken place in Paris, the Provost of the Merchants, two out of the four sheriffs and all other officials suspected of Royalist sympathies having been deprived of their offices, and their places filled by adherents of the dominant party.<sup>1</sup>

On reaching Chartres, where, thanks to the efforts of the Chancellor Cheverny, who was Governor of the Orléanais and the Beauce, and the bishop of the diocese, Nicolas de Thou, one of the uncles of the historian and, like all his family, devoted to the monarchy, Henri III was fairly well received, although the League was very strong in the town. The fugitive King issued a letter to the provincial governors and municipal corporations on the subject of the recent disturbances. It was sadly apologetic in tone—so much so, indeed, that one might almost have supposed that the King was seeking to justify himself for not having permitted Guise to seize him in his own palace. He complained of the duke in a style which a pamphlet of the time describes as that "of a man who fears that his enemy is still angry and indisposed to be satisfied with the evil he has done him." He had only, he declared, quitted Paris to avoid the necessity of employing his forces against the town,

<sup>1</sup> The Provost of the Merchants, Pérouse, was a Leaguer, but he had bitterly offended his confederates by his efforts to maintain order in the streets. He was not only deprived of his office, but imprisoned in the Bastille. On learning of what had occurred, Guise at once proceeded to the Bastille, insisted on his release, and conducted him to his house. But no sooner was the duke's back turned, than Pérouse was again arrested and incarcerated. This time, Guise, though much irritated, did not venture to interfere. He was conscious that, great as was his influence with the Parisians, it had its limits.

which "he loved so much and desired still to love." He had begged the Queen-mother to remain there, in order that she might endeavour, in his absence, "to assuage the said tumult"; and his greatest grief was that the inhabitants of Paris could have believed that he wished to give them a foreign garrison and that he doubted their fidelity.

Guise immediately issued his own version of the affair, according to which nothing could have been more irreproachable than his own conduct. On the Tuesday, the King had asked him if he had any soldiers in Paris, to which he had made answer that he had not a single one within fifty leagues of the town. On the Thursday, when the troops were being posted, he was in bed and asleep, "not so much as dreaming of any disturbance." On this Day of the Barricades, which he describes as "all resplendent with the infallible protection of God," he had made every possible effort to restore order. "I cannot (being a man)," he observes, "help confessing that I experienced a certain satisfaction, and my happiness would have been complete, had it pleased the King to witness a little longer my respect and filial obedience towards him . . . for my power that day was limited only by the fear and the love of God and the desire He had implanted in me to act rightly." Disdainfully he shows Henri III flying "twenty-four hours after I could have arrested him a thousand times, if I had wished." And he continues: "I have taken the Bastille, the Arsenal, and the strong places into my hands; I have caused the coffers in the Treasury to be sealed, in order that I may transmit them into the hands of his Majesty, when in a pacific mood, such as we hope to render him by our prayers to God, by the intercession of His Holiness and of all the Christian princes; or, if the evil continues, I hope, by the same means, to preserve the religion and the Catholics, and to free them from the persecution which the confederates of the heretics about the King are preparing."

But, even in this audacious letter the victor protested his fidelity to the King; for the League, while consolidating its position in Paris and striving to win over all France to its cause, did not believe its triumph assured, unless it could succeed in effecting a nominal reconciliation with Henri III and governing in his name. With this object in view, it favoured all the steps taken to justify or excuse the Parisians for the disturbances of May 12 and 13, and a stream of deputations from the Parlement, the Cour des Aides, and the clergy, both regular and secular, took the road to Chartres. These deputations were, on the whole, very well received by the King, who informed the delegates of the Parlement that, when the Parisians returned to their obedience, he was ready to receive and embrace them "as a good King his subjects and a good father his children." Henri's gorge rose, however, when the President Neuilly, a notoriously bitter Leaguer, in haranguing his Majesty on behalf of the Cour des Aides, overacted his part and broke down in the middle of his discourse; and he could not refrain from some sarcastic observations at the orator's expense. Neuilly avenged himself by starting an active propaganda for the League in Chartres, under the eyes of the King, who did not venture to remonstrate, and was ably seconded by certain members of his party who introduced themselves into the town in the wake of a singular procession, which left Paris on May 17.

This procession was composed of Capuchins, Feuillants, and White Penitents—the *confrères* of Henri III—who came to beg the King to be reconciled to his good town of Paris, in memory of the Passion of Our Lord. At its head marched a converted worldling, Henri de Joyeuse, Comte du Boucage, brother of the Duc de Joyeuse, who had assumed the Capuchin habit under the name of Frère Ange. He entered the royal presence disguised as Our Saviour mounting to Calvary, and apparently sinking under the weight of a huge cross of painted



cardboard. His face was sprinkled with rouge to counterfeit the blood descending from a crown of artificial thorns, and monks garbed as Roman soldiers pretended to belabour him with scourges. Two young Capuchins represented the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. This masquerade, revived from the Mystery plays of the Middle Ages, appears to have been regarded as more scandalous than edifying, nor did it greatly affect the King, notwithstanding his taste for spectacles of this kind.

After besieging the King with deputations and assurances of fidelity for more than a week, on May 24 the League once again showed its claws, and addressed to Henri III a Request from "the cardinal, princes, lords, and deputies of the town of Paris and other Catholic towns, associated and united for the defence of religion," demanding the disgrace of d'Épernon and his brother La Valette, the King's lieutenant in Provence, who were described as "makers of heretics and despoilers of the public Treasury," the dismissal of d'O, Governor of the Île-de-France, the confirmation of the new municipality of Paris, and the withdrawal of "all companies of men-of-war" to a distance of twelve leagues from the capital. It further demanded that his Majesty should march in person against the heretics of Guienne, and that Mayenne, at the head of another army, should be sent against those of Provence.

At the time when this request was presented, d'Épernon, the man whom it declared to be responsible for most of the evils of the country, was with the King. On the news of Henri's flight from Paris, he had hastened from Normandy to endeavour to persuade his master to show a bold front to the enemy; but his exhortations had no effect upon the feeble monarch, who feared to associate himself any longer with his favourite's unpopularity. He did not, however, go so far as to disgrace the duke, as the League had demanded, but adopted, as usual, a middle course, and told him that he must resign his

governments of Normandy, Saintonge, Metz, and the Angoumois. D'Épernon consented to surrender Normandy, on condition that it was not given to a Leaguer noble; and it was bestowed upon the Duc de Montpensier, a Royalist. But he declined to part with the others, perhaps with the King's secret approval, and left suddenly for Angoulême, where, in case of emergency, he could summon the Huguenots to his succour.

Towards the end of June, Henri III moved to Rouen, where, assisted by the indefatigable Catherine, he proceeded to treat with the League. As the result of the negotiations which ensued, his Majesty capitulated on almost every point, and signed the Edict of Union, which on July 21 was duly registered by the Parlement of Paris.

Never was a more humiliating treaty signed by a king. Not only did he confirm the Treaty of Nemours and engage afresh to exterminate heresy in his realm, but he consented to the publication of the Council of Trent, abandoned to the League Boulogne, Metz, Verdun, and all the places which d'Épernon had successfully defended against it; accorded a full and complete amnesty to the Parisians for all that they had done on May 12 and 13, and confirmed the new Provost of the Merchants, the sheriffs and the other municipal officials in the charges which they had usurped.

In one matter only was Henri firm. In spite of the repeated solicitations, backed by the Queen-mother's entreaties, he absolutely declined to return to Paris.

"Alas! my son!" exclaimed Catherine. "Is it possible that you have grown so unforgiving? Your disposition must be completely changed." "I think it is, Madame," answered the King lightly. "But what can you expect? That wicked d'Épernon must have spoiled my temper."

On July 23, the King returned to Chartres, whither the members of the new municipality of Paris came to



thank him, and were well received. The Duc de Guise and the Cardinal de Bourbon came also. The former's manner was constrained; he appeared "penetrated with reverence for the King"; but nothing could exceed the graciousness of Henri's reception of him. When the duke knelt to kiss his hand, he raised him up and embraced him affectionately. Nevertheless, the sallies in which his Majesty occasionally indulged appear to have puzzled Guise not a little. One day, at a banquet, the King invited the duke to drink with him. "Whom shall we pledge?" he asked. "It is for your Majesty to choose," replied Guise. "Then let us drink to our good friends the Huguenots." "Very well, Sire." "And to our good Barricaders of Paris," added the King; "we must not forget to pledge them." L'Estoile, who relates the anecdote, tells us that Guise drank the toast smiling, but that very soon afterwards he withdrew troubled and thoughtful, not finding the jest an amusing one.

About the same time, he wrote to Mendoza in evident perplexity:—

"It is not easy in the short time we have been here to judge of the state of affairs. The beginning has been excellent, and the reception of great good cheer, extending to the least of our party. If we might go by appearances, and by common report, we should anticipate a great change for the better. . . . In brief, we cannot judge whether it be an extreme dissimulation—one greater than a French mind can carry out—or a marvellous mutation, and, as it were, a new world. . . . When I penetrate further into the heart, I will let you know."<sup>1</sup>

In appearance, at any rate, Henri III seemed to be quite resigned to the humiliating position to which he had been reduced, and to be prepared to make his surrender to the League as complete as possible. On August 4, letters-patent conferred upon Guise supreme authority over all the armies, with the title of Lieutenant-

<sup>1</sup> Macdowall, "Henry of Guise and other Portraits."

General of the Kingdom. The Cardinal de Bourbon, in his quality of heir-presumptive to the throne, was granted the right of nominating a master of each trade in every town in France, and the officers of his household were given the same privileges as those of the King's. Aumale received the government of Picardy, and Guise's half-brother, the Duc de Nemours, that of the Lyonnais. The Cardinal de Guise was promised the legation of Avignon, and Espinac, Archbishop of Lyons—Espinac, who had published a scandalous pamphlet against the King and d'Épernon, called *l'Anti-Galveston* (sic), in which their relations were compared to those which were supposed to have existed between Edward II and his favourite Piers Gaveston—received a promise of the Seals!

Nor did Henri's complaisance towards the League end here; he betrayed even his one faithful friend.

Despoiled of his governments, deprived of his army, isolated in the midst of France, d'Épernon had refused to surrender the town of Angoulême to Guise, and had shut himself up in the château, with his young wife, his friend the Abbé del Bene, and his personal attendants, and had summoned the Huguenots to his aid. An equivocal order sent by the King to the municipal authorities forbidding the admission of soldiers into the town was interpreted by the mayor, Normand, a fanatical Leaguer, as a command to seize d'Épernon, alive or dead. On the morning of August 10, 1588, accompanied by a number of his adherents, he penetrated into the château, without the alarm being given, and made his way, pistol in hand, towards the duke's apartments. D'Épernon was taking a bath; the duchess, escorted by two equerries, had gone to hear Mass at the convent of the Jacobins. The duke's doctor, Sorlin, was the first to perceive the invaders, and, shouting to his patron to barricade the bath-room door, he, though wounded by a shot which was fired at him, rushed off to the servants' quarters to summon assistance. D'Épernon, disdaining to barricade



JEAN LOUIS DE NOGARET DE LA VALETTE, DUC D'ÉPERNON.

himself in the bath-room, seized his sword, and, half-dressed and single-handed though he was, charged his assailants, killed several of them, and kept the rest at bay, until Sorlin and the Abbé del Bene came to his assistance at the head of the servants. Then the Leaguers were driven through the corridors, Normand being mortally wounded in the retreat, until they finally took refuge in a turret, where they were closely blockaded.

Meanwhile, however, the tocsin had sounded, and the populace, rushing to arms, proceeded to besiege the château. The Duchesse d'Épernon, hearing the tumult, came out of the Jacobin convent, upon which the mob rushed upon her, killed the two equerries, who tried to defend their mistress, and carried the lady off in triumph. It then endeavoured to intimidate her into writing a letter to d'Épernon, begging him to surrender. But the duchess, a worthy granddaughter of the grim old Connétable de Montmorency, haughtily replied that the duke was not the man to surrender to such *canaille*, and that he would make them bitterly rue the day when they mishandled his wife. Finally, frightened by her threats or admiring her courage, the Leaguers consented to conduct her to the château, into which, as the gates were barricaded, she gained admission by means of a rope-ladder let down from a window.

For thirty hours d'Épernon and his courageous wife defended the château against the populace, who endeavoured to blow in the gates with petards, and sent a continuous stream of arquebus-balls through every window. Then the arrival of a strong force of Huguenots turned the tables upon the besiegers, and in a few minutes d'Épernon was master of the town. With a forbearance very rare at this epoch, the duke refrained from inflicting any punishment upon those who had fired upon him or those who had slain the equerries of the duchess, with the result that he suddenly became the idol of the populace who had been besieging him a few hours before. "I should never have believed it of

him," observed Guise, with reluctant admiration, on being informed of what had occurred at Angoulême; "his valour saved him, and his prudence has established him in those parts." It is probable, however, that the people of Angoulême would not have found d'Épernon nearly so accommodating had he not believed that the King was the ally and accomplice of the League.

While the last defenders of Henri III were in arms against his wish and were being treated almost as rebels at Angoulême, the Court was anxiously awaiting intelligence of the progress of the Armada. The King was well aware that if the great expedition which Philip II was launching against the shores of England were to prove successful, the loss of his own throne and the dismemberment of France could scarcely be averted. If, on the other hand, it failed, Spain would no longer be in a position to intervene with much effect in the affairs of France, and he might yet succeed in check-mating the designs of the League. "If the Spanish fleet could be defeated," said he to the English Ambassador, Stafford, "all good things will follow."

Towards the end of August, the Spanish Ambassador, Mendoza, arrived at Chartres. He alighted from his horse at the door of the cathedral, joyfully announced a great victory of the Armada over the English heretics, and demanded a *Te Deum*. While it was being sung, the people acclaimed the Spaniard, and escorted him in triumph to the bishop's palace, where the King was lodged. Henri III listened coldly to the Ambassador's news, and then, observing that he was in possession of later and more authentic information, handed him a letter from the Governor of Calais, which stated that the Armada had sustained a crushing defeat, that more than a dozen ships had been destroyed, that one of the largest was lying a complete wreck upon Calais sands, and that the rest had been scattered by a violent gale. Overwhelmed by the news, Mendoza withdrew, covered



with confusion, and returned to Paris; but Guise did not hesitate to act as the representative of Philip II's interests at the Court, and demanded that 300 galley-slaves belonging to the ship which had gone ashore at Calais should be returned to the King of Spain. The Maréchaux d'Aumont and de Biron maintained that once a slave touched the soil of France he recovered his freedom, and that the Turks ought to be sent back to their own country. And they had them brought to Chartres and placed them "along the length of the steps of the church up which the King was to pass to hear Mass, being nude as they were when they held the oar."<sup>1</sup> Henri, emboldened by the news that had just come from England, from which it appeared that the defeat of the Armada was even more complete than was at first supposed, decided that the slaves were free, and caused them to be conducted to Marseilles and placed on board Turkish ships, each with a crown in his hand.

<sup>1</sup> Palma Cayet, *Chronique novenaire*.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Henri III dismisses his Ministers and replaces them by men who are entire strangers to public affairs—His reasons for this step—Guise's position, immensely strong in appearance, in reality almost desperate—He determines to force the King virtually to abdicate in his favour—He is warned against attending the Estates of Blois, but refuses to absent himself—Meeting of the Estates—Attempt to prevent the Comte de Soissons from taking his seat—The deputies insist on Henri III swearing anew to observe the Act of Union and on the King's Speech being amended—The Duke of Savoy invades the marquisate of Saluzzo—Guise unjustly suspected by Henri III of complicity in this affair—Implacable attitude of the Estates towards Henri of Navarre—Refusal of the Third Estate to vote subsidies—Abject appeals of the King—His intolerable situation.

HENRI III succeeded in dissembling the joy which the disastrous termination of Philip II's much-vaunted crusade against the English heretics occasioned him and continued to show the greatest amiability towards the chiefs of the League. On September 11, 1588, the Court removed to Blois, Guise accompanying it, there to await the meeting of the States-General, which his adversaries and his own financial necessities had imposed upon the King. A few days later, without consulting any one, Henri abruptly dismissed his Ministers: the Chancellor Cheverny, Bellièvre, Villeroy, and the Secretaries of State, Brulart and Pinart, and replaced them by men who were entire strangers to public affairs and without any connections at the Court. A simple advocate of the Parlement, Montholon, noted for his integrity and his eloquent pleading, received the Seals, while two former Government clerks, Revol and Boileau-Ruzé, became Secretaries of State. This ministerial revolution occasioned general astonishment and gave



rise to much speculation; but there can be little doubt as to the cause of it. The King considered that the disgraced Ministers were far too much under the influence of the Queen-mother, in whom he had ceased to have any confidence, and he could not forgive either Catherine or them for having constantly preached to him submission. He desired to have about him honest men, without political attachments or antecedents, who could be trusted to execute the wishes of their master without discussion.

As Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, Guise could, if he had wished, have taken command of a new army which was being raised to operate against the Huguenots in Poitou; but he considered his presence at the States-General indispensable to the success of his schemes, and the command had accordingly been entrusted to Nevers. The chief of the League had come to Blois very uneasy in his mind, for, immensely strong as his position appeared to be, it was far from being so in reality. The King's misfortunes had already produced a strong revulsion in his favour, particularly among the nobility and gentry. It was one thing, they considered, to denounce the vices and follies of the Sovereign; it was quite another to trample royalty underfoot; and that was what the League appeared to be aiming at, under the pretext of upholding the Church. Many of Guise's aristocratic adherents, too, resented the importance which he attached to the good-will of the Parisian populace and the persistent manner in which he courted its favour; and since the Day of the Barricades there had been numerous defections in their ranks.

If, however, many had fallen away from him, because they held that he had gone too far, there were others who were inclined to turn against him, because, in their opinion, he had not gone far enough. There was his sister, Madame de Montpensier, who boasted that she wore at her girdle the golden scissors which were to give Henri III his third crown—the tonsure. There

were the fanatics who vowed that they would carry him to Rheims and shut "Brother Henri" up in a monastery. There were the swashbuckling captains, the men of broken fortunes, whose hopes of repairing them were centred in him, and who now formed the bulk of his entourage. There were the Sixteen and the turbulent rabble whom they represented. All these blamed him for having permitted the King to escape from Paris, and urged him to violent measures. He was weary of preaching patience, weary of endeavouring to pacify them, and in constant dread of their compromising everything by their extravagances.

Again, his relations with his own family were by no means as harmonious as could be desired. The Duke of Lorraine had been much offended, because, in the previous year, his kinsman had made no effort to prevent the devastation of his dominions by the invading army, though it is difficult to see what Guise could have done, unless he had been so imprudent as to offer battle to the enemy with vastly inferior forces. Mayenne, Aumale and Elbeuf resented the dictatorial tone which he habitually assumed towards them, and suspected him of being only too ready to sacrifice them to his own interests; and he had lately had a violent quarrel with Mayenne, on the subject of a lady, the celebrated Charlotte de Beaune, Marquise de Noirmoutiers, who, as Madame de Sauve, had been one of the most dangerous sirens of Catherine's "*escadron volant*," and was still, although in her thirty-eighth year, almost as attractive as ever. The seductive Charlotte, at Henri III's instigation, it is alleged, had endeavoured to set the two brothers by the ears, as, in days gone by, at the Queen-mother's bidding, she had sought to separate Henri of Navarre and François de Valois. She had been but too successful, and, after high words on both sides, which might have led to something more dangerous, but for the intervention of their friends, Mayenne had quitted the Court, deeply incensed against his brother. Of all his



CHARLOTTE DE BEAUNE, DAME DE SAUVE, AFTERWARDS MARQUISE  
DE NOIRMOUTIERS.

relations, his younger brother, the Cardinal Louis, was the only one upon whose loyalty Guise could implicitly rely.

And the financial question had once more become a burning one. Guise's resources were well-nigh exhausted, and he feared that he could no longer count with any degree of certainty on assistance from Philip II, crippled as that potentate was by the Armada fiasco.

In short, Guise knew that he was in desperate case. Time, which had once been on his side, was now on that of the King. Unless, during the coming meeting of the Estates, he could, with their aid, succeed in forcing Henri III virtually to abdicate in his favour, he was a lost man. It is highly improbable that he had any thought of wresting the crown from the King's head and placing it on his own. To make such an attempt would be to raise up friends for Henri from the ground. And, besides, there were many between him and the throne; not only the Protestant princes, Henri of Navarre and the young Prince de Condé, but the Catholic Bourbons, the Cardinal, Conti, Soissons, and Montpensier; and, in his own House, the Duke of Lorraine and his son, the Marquis de Pont-à-Mousson, a grandson of Henri II. None of these would be inclined tamely to stand aside. But, if Henri III were obliged to allow him to govern France in his name, then he might succeed in making his position so strong that, when the King died—and it was improbable that he would live many years—nothing would be able to shake it, and the crown would pass to him who was already Sovereign in all but name.

Guise was well aware that, in driving even so feeble a prince as Henri III to desperation, he was playing a most dangerous game. But his mind was made up, and, though several of his friends warned him against going to Blois, nothing would change his resolution. "They cannot kill me except in the King's cabinet," he said to Mendoza, when the Ambassador pointed out

to him the risk he was running, "and he is not likely to keep a plot so quiet that I shall not hear of it. In any case, I must go." And so he went, to stake his life against the Crown of France.

As in 1576, the League employed every means, legitimate or otherwise, to influence the elections. "I have forgotten nothing," wrote Guise to Mendoza, "having sent into all the provinces and bailiwicks trusted agents. I think that, having so provided, the greater number of deputies should be for us, and devoted to our interests." In the result, the League secured an immense majority among the Clergy and the Third Estate, though the Nobility were more evenly divided.

The deputies began to arrive at Blois towards the middle of September and commenced their preliminary proceedings on the 16th of the month. The passions which animated them betrayed themselves at almost their first meeting. The Comte de Soissons, one of the younger sons of the first Prince de Condé, had, with his brother Conti, fought in the Huguenot ranks at Coutras. Later, he had returned to the Court, demanded the King's pardon for having borne arms against him, and had been granted letters of *abolition* for his offence. He also applied to the Pope for absolution for having allied himself with heretics, which Sixtus V accorded readily enough. But when the letters of *abolition* were sent to the Parlement for registration, the Leaguers of Paris showed themselves more Catholic than the Pope, and, invading the Grande Chambre, prevented the King's decree from being registered. Now the Clergy passed a resolution that Soissons should not be permitted to take his seat in the States-General, and endeavoured to persuade the other two Orders to come to a similar decision. This they declined to do, though it was only by a very narrow majority that the Third Estate rejected the motion.

But it was not only the religious fanaticism of the



Estates which threatened trouble; a dangerous democratic tone prevailed amongst them. It was said quite openly, particularly by the deputies from the towns, that the sovereignty appertained to the States, not to the King; that they ought to proceed by resolution, not by supplication, and that the King was merely, as it were, president of the Estates, to which all power belonged. The majority did not go so far as this, but it decided that the King should be petitioned "to ratify what should be done, concluded and decreed by the Estates as the fundamental law of the realm.

Before the Estates were formally opened, the Clergy and the Third Estate united to invite the King to swear anew to observe the Edict of Union, and to declare that he would permit only one religion in his realm. Henri replied that the second oath was unnecessary; that they appeared to question his sincerity; that such a doubt was most offensive, and that he must refuse. The deputies insisted; the King reiterated his refusal. On October 14, he was still resisting, but on the 15th he surrendered, and, to disguise his defeat, protested that his objections had been due to a misunderstanding. He had believed that his subjects were soliciting him to swear to the observance of the Edict at the opening session; but, since it was a question of another date, he yielded to their desires. This transparent fiction deceived no one, and served but to encourage his enemies to wring from his feebleness even greater concessions than they had contemplated.

The Estates were formally opened by the King on the 16th, in the Salle des États of the château. Guise, as Grand Master of the King's Household, sat on a stool at the foot of the throne, facing the assembly, and it was upon him, rather than upon the Sovereign, that all eyes were directed. The struggle between Henri III and the deputies began over the King's Speech, which contained several observations displeasing to the League, notably a hint that bribery and intimidation

had played no small part in the elections. The Archbishop of Lyons protested that it was impossible for the speech to be printed as it stood, and that his Majesty must consent to amend it. At first, Henri flatly refused to alter a word; then, when the Estates insisted, incontinently surrendered.

The King ascribed to the chief of the League a humiliation which was particularly hard for him to bear. Charles Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, one of the most restless and ambitious princes in Europe, had profited by the internal troubles of France to invade the marquise of Saluzzo. This act of aggression was the more indefensible, as, at the beginning of his reign, Henri III had ceded to the House of Savoy a great part of his possessions beyond the Alps. The King and the nobility were infuriated at the news, and for a moment it seemed that the Estates would propose to treat with the Huguenots, in order to punish the insolence of the invader. But the Spanish Ambassador won over La Chapelle-Marteau, one of the presidents of the Third Estate, and the Clergy declared that they ought to allow nothing to interfere with the prosecution of the Holy War.

Henri III was unable to believe that the Duke of Savoy would have ventured to defy France if he had not been assured of the complicity of the League. He was wrong, for Guise's letters prove that nothing could have been further from his wish, and that he was quite disconcerted by the news. "I fear," he writes to Mendoça, "that it will upset all my intentions and designs, and that the King, my master, may come to an agreement with the heretics to make war on M. de Savoy." But Henri was convinced to the contrary, and it is perhaps at this moment that the idea of ridding himself of Guise by assassination again recurred to his mind.

He held, indeed, the duke responsible for all the affronts that were being put upon him. The Estates wished to declare Navarre, as a relapsed heretic, deprived of his right to the Crown. Henri desired that, before



condemning him, they should give him one more chance of returning to the fold of the Church. The Estates unanimously rejected his proposal, the Archbishop of Embrun declaring that they were resolved to solicit the King of Navarre no more, that he was a rotten branch, and that no one could without committing a crime enter into any relations with him. In the implacable attitude of the deputies towards Navarre and the all-but successful attempt to prevent the Comte de Soissons from sitting with them, Henri saw the hand of Guise, interested in proscribing all the Bourbons, Catholic or Protestant.

But it was on the question of taxation and supplies that the King was to suffer his worst humiliations. Here the Estates showed themselves intractable. Persuaded that economy would suffice to re-establish the finances, they refused Henri III all subsidies, without ceasing to demand the continuance of the war against the heretics. In the hope of obtaining money, the King employed every means to conciliate the members of the Third Estate, accusing himself publicly before them of having mismanaged the finances, and promising that in future he would carefully supervise public expenditure and introduce the most rigid economy into his own household. The explanations to which he descended compromised to no small extent the royal dignity: "I know, gentlemen, that I have sinned; I have offended God, but for the future I will reduce my expenses to the lowest limit. Where there were two capons on my table, there shall henceforth be only one." The deputies, so far from being touched by these confessions and promises of amendment, demanded that he should reduce the *tailles* to the level at which they had stood in 1576, and La Chapelle-Marteau, on behalf of the Third Estate, declared that his colleagues had decided that, if their demands were refused, they would forthwith return to their homes. On this condition alone would they agree to find money for the two wars and the expenses of the Royal Household.

With each concession wrung from the unfortunate monarch, the Leaguers grew more insolent. It was in vain that Henri appealed to them "to consider his quality and to refrain from prostrating entirely the authority of the Crown." In every session of the clergy and of the Third Estate he was criticised in the most unsparing terms ; on every holy day the preachers assailed him from their pulpits with a bitterness hardly excelled by those of Paris. At last, he sent for Guise and begged him to endeavour to moderate the language of his followers. The duke answered coldly that he had no power to interfere.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

Henri III, convinced that Guise is aiming at the usurpation of the royal authority, resolves to anticipate his enemy—And appeals to his most trusted counsellors to save him, by suggesting “a prompt remedy” —The assassination of Guise decided upon—Laugnac undertakes to perpetrate the crime, with the aid of the *Quarante-cinq*—Guise, though warned that his life is in danger, refuses to leave Blois—Preparations for the crime—Henri III and the *Quarante-cinq*—The assassination —Arrest of the Cardinal de Guise and the Archbishop of Lyons—Catherine learns of the tragedy—Vigorous measures adopted by Henri III—The cardinal and the archbishop in the Tour des Moulins —Assassination of the Cardinal de Guise—Disposal of the bodies of the murdered brothers—Death of Catherine de’ Medici.

As winter approached, with its cold and fogs, the mind of Henri III, as though in harmony with the season, grew correspondingly gloomy and suspicious. To the humiliations of each day were joined the fears of the morrow. Guise had gone too far to draw back, and the King did not doubt that the duke intended to finish at the Estates of Blois the work of the barricades of Paris. Warnings as to the projects of his enemy poured in upon Henri from all sides. It was said that he intended to have himself invested by the Estates with the sword of Constable, with the forced sanction of the King, which would render irrevocable the authority which Henri had recently given him over his armies, and make of him a veritable Mayor of the Palace. Then, as soon as the Estates were dissolved, he would oblige his unfortunate Sovereign to return with him to Paris, never to leave it again. Royalist and Huguenot writers assert that Guise was denounced to the King by members of his own family ; that Mayenne besought his Majesty to beware of his brother, and that the Duchesse d’Aumale,

to whom the King had formerly paid his addresses, sent him, on behalf of her mother, warnings of the most circumstantial kind. Both Mayenne and the Duchesse d'Aumale subsequently denied these accusations with the utmost indignation, and it is probable that, if warnings purporting to come from them were received by the King, they were forgeries.

At length, in despair, Henri III resolved to anticipate his enemy, and to execute at Blois what he had not dared to do at Paris before the Day of the Barricades. For several months, indeed, the idea of assassination had obsessed his mind. Just as, in 1572, Catherine had committed the mistake of supposing that the fortunes and strength of the Protestant party depended on the life of Coligny, so now he believed that the League was incarnate in Guise. This error was to cost both the duke and himself their lives.

On December 18, during the fêtes given by the Queen-mother to celebrate the marriage of her granddaughter, Christine of Lorraine, to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Henri sent for the Maréchal d'Aumont and two other Counsellors of State, Nicolas d'Angennes, Sieur de Rambouillet, and Beauvais-Nangis, and having explained to them the danger which menaced him, begged them to save him, by suggesting "a prompt remedy." They demanded twenty-four hours for reflection, and returned to the King on the morrow, accompanied by Rambouillet's brother, the Sieur de Maintenon, one of the deputies of the Nobility, and the Corsican Ornano. The Maréchal d'Aumont, according to De Thou, Rambouillet, according to Davila, then suggested that Guise should be arrested and brought to trial for high treason. The others, however, objected, pointing out that it would be impossible to get the courts to convict, and that the only result would be to render the duke more formidable than ever, and declared that there was no alternative but a *coup de main*—that is to say, an assassination. And they brought forward many specious arguments to justify

the step they advised, which were somewhat superfluous, since his Majesty's conscience did not require to be reassured, he having demanded their counsel less on the resolution to be adopted than on the means of executing it.

The assassination of the chief of the League was thus determined on; but the enterprise was not an easy one. Guise was invariably accompanied by a numerous suite, armed to the teeth, and including some of the most redoubtable *bretteurs* in France; and, as Grand Master of the King's Household, he kept the keys of the château, so that it was impossible to reinforce the guard without his knowledge. The disposition of the King's apartments, however, offered the conspirators a chance of entrapping him.

The King lodged on the second floor of the château, in the wing constructed by François I. Those who ascended by the wonderful open staircase arrived at an ante-chamber, which served as a dining-room and a council-chamber. At the end of this room a door opened into the King's bedchamber, which was flanked at either extremity by a cabinet—that on the right being known as the New Cabinet, and that on the left as the Old Cabinet. When one of the princes waited on the King, it was customary for his suite to remain in the ante-chamber, unless the Council happened to be sitting there, in which event the suite remained on the Grand Staircase, or on the adjoining terrace, called “la Perche aux Bretons.” Guise, who seldom attended the meetings of the Council, had forgotten this arrangement; but Henri III had noted it carefully as the one means of separating the duke from his attendants.

The assassination was fixed for the following Friday—December 23—and Larchant, Captain of the Gardes du Corps, d'Entragues, Governor of Orléans, and some others were admitted to the secret. It remained, however, for Henri III to choose the instruments of his vengeance or—as his Majesty no doubt called it—of his salvation.

The King addressed himself first to Crillon, but that bluff warrior replied, with his customary outspokenness, that he was a soldier by profession, not an executioner; that, if his Majesty desired him to endeavour to kill M. de Guise in a duel, he would obey with all the willingness imaginable; otherwise, he must beg to be excused. Henri did not press him further, and contented himself by binding him to secrecy. He then applied to Laugnac, who, far less scrupulous than Crillon, readily undertook to do the business with the aid of the *Quarante-cinq*.

Guise had not received less warnings as to the peril which menaced his life than had Henri III on the danger which threatened his throne. All the world, if we are to believe certain contemporary writers, foresaw the approach of some great catastrophe. But the duke seemed to ridicule the idea of danger. What served to reassure him was not the oath "of reconciliation and perfect amity" which the King had sworn a fortnight before on the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, for he believed Henri quite capable of violating the most sacred oaths, but the utter contempt which he entertained for his pusillanimous Sovereign. In his opinion, he was totally incapable of any energetic or determined resolution. There was, he declared, no spark of manliness or courage in him. He forgot that even the most timid beast will turn to bay, if no way of escape remains.

His friends did not share his confidence. An altercation which Guise had had with the King on December 21, when the duke had threatened to resign his post of Lieutenant-General, unless Henri were prepared to make yet further concessions to the insolence of the League, had occasioned them considerable uneasiness, and, in a council of the chiefs of the party held on the following morning, the Président de Neuilly, with tears in his eyes, had besought the duke to leave Blois. The Cardinal de Guise appeared to waver; but the Archbishop of Lyons, who had been promised a cardinal's hat, and feared that, if the duke quitted the Court, his

ambition might not be realised, cried, "Who leaves the field, loses it." Guise had no intention of leaving the field. "If," said he, "I saw death coming in at the window, I would not go out of the door to avoid it." He could not, indeed, leave Blois at that juncture without the risk of losing the prize for which he had so long been striving, at the very moment when it seemed almost within his grasp; but he might have kept on his guard and checkmated by his watchfulness the machinations of his enemies. He did not do so; on the contrary, he appeared possessed by a spirit of bravado, and went blindly to meet his fate.

That same day, on rising from the dinner-table, he found under his napkin a note warning him that the King was plotting against his life. He wrote at the bottom of it these words: "*Il n'oseroit*" (He would not dare), and threw it under the table. In the evening, his cousin Elbeuf came to tell him that he was assured that there was a conspiracy against the persons of the Catholic princes. He only laughed, told him to go to bed, and went to sup and pass the early part of the night with his mistress Madame de Noirmoutiers, who, according to the expression of Le Laboureur, "*allait coucher d'un parti chez l'autre*." The Duchesse de Guise, it may be mentioned, had lately gone to Paris, to present her faithless lord with the fourteenth pledge of her affection.

One of the ablest of the historians of the Guises, M. Henri Forneron, would have us believe that the duke's infatuation for this siren was the main factor in determining him to prolong his sojourn at Blois, despite all the warnings that he was continually receiving. But we are inclined to think that M. Forneron, who has a decided weakness for the romantic, exaggerates the importance of this affair of the heart, if it can be dignified by such a name. The necessity which Guise was under of securing the consecration of his pretensions by the Estates is surely a sufficient explanation of his remaining at Blois, without seeking any other!



As Christmas approached, Henri III appeared absorbed in devotion. He had a number of little cells constructed above his apartments for the accommodation of Capuchin monks; he seemed to wish to efface himself from all eyes and to dwell in the midst of the most complete isolation, and spoke of giving up the reins of government to his mother and Guise, while he attended to his own soul. The employment of each day during the week preceding the great festival had been regulated in advance. On Friday, December 23, the King was to go on pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Cléry. On the evening of the 22nd, about seven o'clock, he ordered his first equerry, Liancourt, to have a coach ready at the door of the Galerie des Cerfs, at four o'clock the next morning, as he intended to go to La Noue, a hermitage on the borders of the forest, about six miles from the château, and return in time for the Council. On account of this early start, the keys of the château, which Guise, as Grand Master, always kept at night, were left with the King. At the same time, Henri charged his Master of the Ceremonies, Marle, to request the Duc and Cardinal de Guise, the Archbishop of Lyons and other members of the Council, to be in the council-chamber about seven o'clock in the morning, as there was some pressing business to be got through before Christmas, and he did not wish his devotions to be interrupted during the rest of the week. He counted that, at this unaccustomed hour, the duke's suite would be much less numerous than usual.

About nine o'clock, he sent for the Sieur de Larchant, captain of the Gardes du Corps, and directed him to present himself next morning before Guise, at the head of his company, as the duke was ascending the staircase to the council-chamber, with a request that he would use his good offices with the Council to obtain for them their arrears of pay. Then, so soon as Guise had entered the council-chamber, the Gardes du Corps were to occupy the staircase and guard the door, "so that no one could

enter, leave, or pass by; while, at the same time, Larchant was to post twenty of his men on the staircase of the Old Cabinet, which led down to the Galerie des Cerfs, with similar orders. He then sent secret instructions to the *Quarante-cinq* to be in his chamber at five o'clock next morning, and retired to his cabinet, "accompanied by the *Sieur de Termes* only. And, having there remained till midnight, 'My son,' said he, 'get you to bed and bid Du Halde fail not to awaken me at four o'clock, and be here yourself at the same hour.' The King took his candlestick and went to pass the night with the Queen. The *Sieur de Termes* retired also, and on his way communicated the order of the King to the *Sieur du Halde*, who asked him to hold a light for him while he set his alarm at four o'clock."<sup>1</sup>

At four o'clock on Friday morning, Du Halde knocked at the door of the Queen's bedchamber; and her Majesty's first waiting-woman, the *Dame de Pintaut*, came and inquired what he wanted. "Tell the King that it is four o'clock," said he. "But he is asleep, and so is the Queen." "Then you must wake him; it is his order; or I shall knock so loudly that I shall awaken them both." The King, however, had not slept at all. He rose at once. "Pintaut," said he to the waiting-woman, "give me my boots, my dressing-gown and my candlestick." And, leaving the Queen in great perplexity, he went into his cabinet, where Du Halde and *Termes* were awaiting him. He asked for the keys of the little cells above his apartments, where the *Capuchins* were to be lodged, and locked Du Halde into one of them. The *valet de chambre* thought that his royal master had suddenly taken leave of his senses, and was very much alarmed.

Henri then descended to his bedchamber, where the *Quarante-cinq* were beginning to assemble, and, as each man arrived, he was taken up and locked in one of the

<sup>1</sup> *Relation de la Mort de Messieurs les duc et Cardinal de Guise, par le Sieur Miron, médecin du Roy Henri III<sup>e</sup>, Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France, vol. xii.*

cells, the King creeping stealthily up and down the dark staircase, dimly lighted by a taper which Termes carried.

When the members of the Council and the officers on duty began to arrive, the King made the *Quarante-cinq* descend by the secret staircase which led from the roof of the château to the New Cabinet, bidding them move softly, so as not to disturb the Queen-mother, whose bedchamber was immediately below his own.

When the whole band was assembled, the King addressed them in a speech which will be found at length in the *Relation* of his physician Miron, telling them of all the wrongs and humiliations he had suffered at the hands of the Duc de Guise, and declaring that now matters had come to such a pass that it was a question of the duke's death or his own. "I am reduced to such an extremity," said he, "that either he or I must die this very morning. Are you willing to serve me and avenge me, by taking his life?"

The *Quarante-cinq* entertained the bitterest hatred of Guise, who had been urging the Estates to demand their disbandment, on the ground that they were a great and unnecessary expense, a step which, for most of them, would have meant an abrupt descent from a life of ease and plenty to the poverty and obscurity from which they had sprung. Their delight on learning the duty which the King required of them knew no bounds, and they were with difficulty prevented from compromising everything by shouts of exultation. One of them, Périac, by name, tapped his Majesty familiarly on the chest and exclaimed in his Gascon patois: "*Cap de Diou, Sire! iou lou bous rendis mort.*" The King bade them be silent, and then inquired which of them had daggers. There were eight, including Périac, who wore a Scottish dirk. These were ordered to remain in the bedchamber, under the command of their captain, Laugnac; twelve of their companions were stationed in the Old Cabinet, to which the King intended to summon

Guise; the others were posted on the staircase leading down from the cabinet to the Galerie des Cerfs.<sup>1</sup>

These preparations completed, the King went into the New Cabinet, and, summoning the Maréchal d'Aumont, told him that, so soon as Guise had been struck down, he was to secure the persons of the Cardinal de Guise and the Archbishop of Lyons. He then sent orders to two of his chaplains, René de Bulle and Étienne Dugouin, to repair to his oratory, a door of which opened into the Old Cabinet, and pray for the success of an enterprise "which would make for the repose of the realm." This they began to do, but, after a while, peeping into the Old Cabinet, they caught sight of Laugnac and one of his companions, Olphan du Guast, dancing together, Du Guast with a naked dagger in his hand, and heard them say that when they had killed some one, whose name was not mentioned, they would throw his body out of the window into the courtyard. The two priests did not doubt that the intended victim was the Duc de Guise. Struck with horror, they went back to their prayers; but now they prayed that the King's heart might be changed.

Meanwhile, Henri III was waiting in an agony of suspense in the New Cabinet, pacing restlessly to and fro, since, such was his agitation, he found it impossible to remain seated. Sometimes, he presented himself at the door and bade the guardsmen take care that Guise did them no harm. "He is tall and strong," said he; "I should be very distressed if he did you any hurt." Presently, he was informed that the Cardinal de Guise was at the Council, but the duke still tarried, and he began to fear that perhaps he might not come.

Guise, as has been said, had supped and spent the early part of the night with Madame de Noirmoutiers. About three o'clock on the Friday morning, he returned to his apartments, which were in the east wing of the château,

<sup>1</sup> *Relation de Miron.*

on the ground floor. There he is said to have found no less than five notes of warning, all urging him to leave Blois without delay. He only treated them as a jest, however, placed them under his pillow, dismissed his attendants and went to bed.

Between seven and eight o'clock he rose, and, finding that the hour fixed for the meeting of the Council was already past, dressed hurriedly in a suit of grey satin, "too thin for the season,"<sup>1</sup> and made his way towards the King's apartments, followed by his secretary Péricart and some of his gentlemen and pages. At the foot of the Grand Staircase, Larchant presented himself, at the head of his men, as had been arranged. His appearance occasioned the duke no surprise, as Larchant had told him of his intention the previous evening. He and his comrades, he declared, were in pitiful straits; unless their arrears of pay were forthcoming, they would be obliged to part with their horses. Guise promised to plead their cause with the Council, and Larchant asked permission for them to wait and learn its decision. Guise consented, imagining, of course, that they intended to remain where they were; but no sooner had the door of the council-chamber closed behind him, than a sharp order rang out, and the Gardes du Corps proceeded to line up in two ranks along the whole length of the staircase and on the landing above, thus barring all access to or egress from the council-chamber, and obliging Guises's suite, who had intended to await the duke's return on the staircase, to go on to the Perche aux Bretons. At the same time, Crillon ordered all the gates of the château to be closed.

These significant movements aroused the utmost consternation amongst Guise's attendants, and his secretary Péricart lost not a moment in writing to his master a note containing the following words: "Monseigneur, save yourself, or you are a dead man!" This note he enclosed in a handkerchief, which he gave to

<sup>1</sup> L'Estoile.

one of the duke's pages to hand to the usher of the council-chamber. But the page came back, saying that he had been refused permission to pass; and Péricart, convinced that Guise was lost, hastened away to warn Madame de Nemours and to destroy his most compromising papers.

On entering the council-chamber, Guise found assembled there, his brother, the cardinal, the Cardinals de Gondi and de Vendôme, the Maréchaux de Retz and d'Aumont, Rambouillet, Marillac and Petrémol, *maîtres des requêtes*, Marcel, Intendant of the Finances, and Fontenay, Treasurer of the Épargne. Shortly afterwards, the Archbishop of Lyons arrived. It was a wet, raw morning, and the duke, complaining of the cold, went to the fire and stood there warming himself. Suddenly, he turned pale; whether owing to some presentiment of his approaching end or the excesses of the previous night, he felt faint. "Monsieur de Fontenay," said he to the Treasurer of the Épargne, "will you be so good as to ask M. de Saint-Prix to bring me some comfits?" Saint-Prix, one of the King's *valets de chambre*, brought him some Brignolles plums; and he began to eat them, and felt better.

The members of the Council took their places at the table, and Petrémol was beginning to read a report on the *gabelle*, when the door opened and the Secretary of State Revol entered. "Monsieur," said he, addressing Guise, "the King is asking for you; he is in his Old Cabinet." Then he hurriedly withdrew. The duke does not appear to have remarked this precipitate retreat or the agitation of Revol, who was so pale that the King had just said to him: "*Mon Dieu*, Revol, how pale you are! You will spoil everything! Rub your cheeks, Revol, rub your cheeks!"

On receiving the royal summons, Guise rose, put some plums into his comfit-box, and threw the rest on the table. "Gentlemen," said he, "who wants any?" Then, flinging his cloak over his left arm, and holding



his gloves and his comfit-box—it was of silver-gilt and in the shape of a shell,—in his left hand, he bowed to his colleagues, went towards the King's bedchamber, was admitted by Nambu, the porter, who immediately closed the door behind him, and found himself in the presence of Laugnac and his companions.

The guardsmen saluted the duke as he entered, and followed him across the room, as though out of respect. At a couple of paces from the narrow passage which led from the bedchamber to the door of the Old Cabinet, uneasy at seeing himself followed, he stopped, nervously fingering his beard with his right hand, and half turned round. Suddenly, the *Sieur de Montséry*, who was near the chimney-place, sprang forward, seized Guise's right arm, and drove his poniard into his left breast, exclaiming: "Ha! traitor, you shall die from this." "And, at the same instant, the *Sieur des Effranats* seized him by the legs, the *Sieur de Saint-Malines* dealt him from behind a great blow with a poniard near the throat; and the *Sieur de Loignac* [*Laugnac*] a sword-thrust in the loins, the duke crying out at all these blows: '*Hé, mes amis! hé, mes amis!*' And when he felt himself struck with a poniard in the back by the *Sieur Sariac* [*Périac?*], he cried out very loudly, 'Mercy!' And, although his sword was entangled in his cloak and his legs seized, he contrived, so powerful was he, to drag his assailants from one end of the chamber to the other, up to the foot of the King's bed, where he fell."<sup>1</sup>

At the sound of the fall, the door of the New Cabinet opened, and the pale face of Henri III looked out. "Is it done?" he asked, and, on being assured that the duke was dead, he came forth to contemplate his victim. "*Mon Dieu*, how tall he is!" he exclaimed, as his eyes wandered over the stately form. "He seems taller dead than alive!" And he is said to have spurned the body with his foot, just as, sixteen years before, Guise himself had spurned the corpse of Coligny. There was still

<sup>1</sup> *Relation de Miron.*



a little life in the mutilated body, however, for when the Secretary Boileau came, by the King's orders, to search the duke's pockets, he noticed a slight tremor in the limbs. "Monseigneur," said Boileau, "if some little life still remains to you, ask pardon of God and the King." The only answer was a long, deep sigh. They covered the corpse with a piece of tapestry, and some one twisted a handful of straw into the form of a cross and laid it on the breast. It was then dragged into the wardrobe, and a couple of hours later delivered over to Duplessis-Richelieu, Grand Provost of France, with instructions that it was to be burned.

But let us see what had been happening meanwhile in the council-chamber.

At the noise of the scuffle in the King's bedchamber, the members of the Council sprang to their feet, and those not in the murderous secret gazed at one another with horror-struck faces. The Cardinal de Guise shouted, "They are killing my brother!" and was making for the door opening on to the Grand Staircase, doubtless with the intention of summoning Guise's attendants, whom he supposed to be waiting there, to their master's aid, when the Maréchal d'Aumont, with his drawn sword in his hand, intercepted him. "Do not budge, Monsieur," said he; "the King has business with you, too." Meantime, the Archbishop of Lyons, a fiery and courageous man, had thrown himself at the door of the King's bedchamber, and was endeavouring to break it in. But it resisted his efforts, and in another moment the room was filled with Larchant's men, and both he and the cardinal were arrested.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The evidence of the archbishop, given subsequently before commissioners appointed by the Parlement of Paris to investigate the crime, is very interesting:—

"So soon as the duke had entered the King's chamber, the door was shut, and, immediately afterwards, a great noise was heard, like a stamping of feet, which caused all the company to suspect what was being done. They rose to their feet, and, when all were standing, the Maréchal de Retz exclaimed loudly, 'France is ruined!' And the deponent, at the same

A few minutes later, the door of the King's bedchamber opened, and Laugnac entered and informed the Council that the Duc de Guise was dead and that he had been "very hard to kill." Nambu, the porter, then appeared and summoned the Cardinal de Vendôme and the other members of the Council into the bedchamber. "Messieurs," said Espinac boldly, "tell the King that we [the Cardinal de Guise and himself] are here, and beg him to give orders as to what he wishes to be done with us."

On seeing his counsellors enter, Henri III, addressing them in an imperious and threatening tone, very different from his usual suave manner, informed them that now, at last, he was King, and that all must learn to respect him and fear the punishment which any attempt against the royal authority would henceforth entail. Then, having repeated the Italian proverb: "When the snake dies, its venom dies with it," he descended in triumph to the apartments of the Queen-mother.

Catherine had been, for some time past, confined to her bed, tormented by the gout. She had heard the noise in the King's apartments, but was ignorant of the cause, as none of her attendants had dared to tell her the truth. "Madame," said Henri, as he entered the room, "I have become King of France; I have killed the King of Paris!" "You have killed the Duc de Guise!" cried Catherine, stupefied with amazement. "God grant, my son, that this death may not make you King of nothing! You have cut boldly into the stuff; but will you know how to sew it together again?" And she fell back, half-fainting, on her pillows.

The same morning, the King caused all the members of the Guise family who happened to be at Blois to be arrested, namely, the duke's mother, the Duchesse de moment, throwing the paper which he held in his hand on the table, cried out these words: 'All is lost!' went straight to the door of the chamber whence the noise proceeded, and tried several times to open the door; and, while there, heard the said Duc de Guise saying several times these words: '*Ha, messieurs!*' and then: '*O quelle trahison!*' And the said deponent heard the blows. Finally, he heard him say these words: '*Mon Dieu, miséricorde!*' and at the same instant heard his fall."

Nemours; his eldest son, the Prince de Joinville, now become Duc de Guise, and his uncle, the Duc d'Elbeuf and, with them, the chiefs of the League, the Cardinal de Bourbon, the Duc de Nemours, Brissac, the hero of the Barricades, and Bois-Dauphin, a noble who had ably seconded him on that occasion. Finally, while the Third Estate was in session, the Grand Provost, at the head of a body of soldiers, invaded the hall, seized La Chapelle-Marteau, the Président de Neuilly and several other deputies, and haled them before the King, who threatened them with death and ordered gibbets to be made ready, though this was only done with the idea of frightening them. Never in his life had Henri III displayed so much energy as he did on that December day.

Meanwhile, the Cardinal de Guise and the Archbishop of Lyons had been conducted to an upper chamber of the Tour des Moulins—a mere garret, “very narrow and dark, lighted only by three little oval windows, about a foot high, and heavily barred, and in which there was no chimney-place.”<sup>1</sup> There they remained until four o'clock, guarded by some of the *Quarante-cinq*, and suffering much from the cold, when they were removed to another room, a little lower down, in which there was a fire-place. This room is known to-day as the “*Salle des Oubliettes*.”<sup>2</sup> About six o'clock, they brought the prisoners eggs, bread and wine from the royal kitchen; but neither of them ate much, and the cardinal very reluctantly, being suspicious of poison.

The young prelate had at first appeared plunged in a sort of stupor, so overwhelmed was he by the terrible fate which had befallen his brother and the fear that he was destined to share it. But, after a time, this stupefaction passed, and was succeeded by a veritable frenzy, in which, careless of those who might overhear him,

<sup>1</sup> Deposition of Pierre d'Espinac, Archbishop of Lyons, *Archives curieuses de l'Histoire de France*, vol. xii.

<sup>2</sup> L. de la Saussaye, *Histoire du Château de Blois*.

he broke forth into the most violent denunciations of the King, upon whom he swore to be avenged.

After supper, the prisoners sent a message to Larchant, asking to be permitted to have their breviaries, their nightgowns and a bed to sleep on. Their request was granted, two mattresses being brought from the archbishop's lodging at the Jacobin convent. Although their room was full of archers and guards, the two prelates were able to converse together in low tones. They said their vespers and complines, heard one another's confessions, and about eleven o'clock threw themselves on their mattresses and tried to sleep.

The same evening, Henri III debated with his confidants the fate of the prisoners. It was decided that the Cardinal de Guise must die. In the eyes of the King, he had at first appeared invulnerable under the safeguard of his triple dignity of Archbishop of Rheims, cardinal, and President of the Order of the Clergy. But Henri's scruples vanished before the fear of seeing a man so bold and vindictive at the head of the League. The threats which had escaped the cardinal in his frenzy had been duly reported to the King, as proof of what efforts to avenge his brother the fiery prelate would not fail to make, if he were suffered to survive him.

The instruments of this new murder were more difficult to find. The *Quarante-cinq*, stained with the blood of Henri de Lorraine, Larchant, and his Gardes du Corps, the Grand Provost and his archers, all recoiled before what they declared to be a sacrilege.<sup>1</sup> At length, Michel du Guast, that same captain of the French Guards whom, with his men, the Duc de Guise had saved from the fury of the populace on the Day of the

<sup>1</sup> La Bastide, one of the assassins of Guise, was the first of the *Quarante-cinq* to whom the King applied; he flatly refused. His Majesty then approached Vatiens, who at first accepted the commission and went, with several of his comrades, to the door of the prison. There they began a dispute as to which of them should enter first, and, not being able to settle it, returned to the King, without having executed their sanguinary task.—Matthieu, *Histoire de France*.





*Si vous avez encore aux Prunelles des larmes,  
Peuples qui soupirez le grand Prince Lorrain;  
Venez les Epancher au tour de son Germain;  
Qui d'un mesme Malheur a souffert les Alarmes.  
Thomas de leu Fe. et esou:*

LOUIS DE LORRAINE, SECOND CARDINAL DE GUISE.

Barricades, and brother of that Olphan du Guast who had been one of the assassins of the duke, undertook to get the cardinal despatched.<sup>1</sup> The King thereupon gave him 400 crowns, with which he bribed three soldiers of his company, Gosin, Châlons, and Violet, to perpetrate the crime.

About three o'clock on the following morning, Saturday, December 24, the two prisoners of the Tour de Moulins rose and said their prayers and their hours up to Prime. At eight o'clock, La Fontaine, one of the *valets de chambre* of the King, entered the room, holding a torch in his hand. Du Guast followed him, and, with a low reverence, said to the cardinal: "Monsieur, the King sends for you." "For both of us?" inquired the cardinal. "I am only charged to summon you," replied Du Guast. As the cardinal was leaving the room, the archbishop whispered in his ear: "Monsieur, think of God." A few moments afterwards, the archbishop heard a noise, a little distance away. It was the unfortunate cardinal, whom Du Guast's ruffians were piercing with their halberds; and about three o'clock in the afternoon, one of Espinac's servants, who had been permitted to come to attend on his master, told him that, on his way thither, he had seen the body lying in a little gallery not far from the room in which the two prelates had been confined.

Henri III did not allow himself to be moved by the supplications of the Duchesse de Nemours, and refused to this weeping mother the bodies of her sons. He feared that the remains of his victims might be regarded like those of martyrs, and used by the Leaguers as a powerful means of exciting popular passion against him. The corpses of the two brothers were accordingly burned in a room at the top of the château, above the Grand Staircase of Louis XII, and the ashes cast into the Loire.

Such was the end of Henri de Lorraine, third Duc de

<sup>1</sup> Michel du Guast is said to have borne a grudge against the Cardinal de Guise, who had some time before detected him cheating at cards.

Guise. This ambitious prince, who had dreamed of a throne, did not even find a tomb!

The demise of another famous personage followed closely upon the death of the Guises. The Queen-mother had been overwhelmed by the tragedy of December 23, in which she saw the utter ruin of her policy of compromise and conciliation. A few days later, she went to visit the old Cardinal de Bourbon, in the apartment where he was kept a close prisoner. The cardinal reproached her bitterly with the crime, and accused her of having enticed the Guises to their destruction. Catherine called upon the Almighty to damn her for all eternity if she had been privy to either murder, and probably succeeded in convincing the cardinal of her innocence. But the interview so affected the old Queen that the gout returned in an aggravated form and obliged her to return to her bed, from which she never rose again. She died on January 5, 1589, in her sixtieth year, with the knowledge that she had intrigued and lied, struggled and sinned, all to no purpose.



## CHAPTER XXXV

Fury of the Parisians at the murder of the Guises—The League becomes frankly revolutionary—Dramatic scene in the Church of Saint-Barthélemy—The Duchesse de Guise gives birth to a posthumous son—Mayenne arrives in the capital and assumes the title of Lieutenant-General of the State and Crown of France—Rapid spread of the insurrection—Henri III concludes an alliance with the King of Navarre—He is besieged in Tours by Mayenne—But is saved by the arrival of the Huguenot army—The two kings advance upon Paris—Consternation in the capital—Henri III and the Duchesse de Montpensier—Jacques Clément—His project of assassinating the King facilitated by the chiefs of the League—His arrival at Saint-Cloud—Assassination of Henri III.

HENRI III, convinced that the League was entirely the work of the Duc de Guise and the general disaffection the result of his intrigues, had persuaded himself that, by his removal, he had struck a blow at that formidable organisation from which it would be impossible for it to recover. He was quickly to discover his mistake. In Paris, the consternation produced by the news was quickly succeeded by an uncontrollable fury. The churches were filled day and night by congregations who responded with sobs and imprecations to the preachers' denunciation of the crime; the portraits of the murdered Lorraine princes, "martyrs for Jesus and the public weal," were exposed upon the altars; Madame de Montpensier, dressed in deepest black, had herself carried through the streets in a litter, haranguing the people and calling on them to avenge her brother; the Cordeliers decapitated the portrait of Henri III which hung in their convent, the royal arms were everywhere pulled down, the images of the King broken, the mausoleum of the *mignons* in the Church of Saint-Jacques destroyed.

As the days passed, and it was seen that the King was incapable of following up his crime with the necessary energy, the exasperation of the people against him seemed to increase. In a tumultuous assembly at the Hôtel de Ville, Aumale was proclaimed Governor of Paris; the League became frankly revolutionary; nocturnal processions, carrying lighted torches, wended their way through the streets to the threshold of Notre-Dame, where they extinguished them with the solemn cry: "So may God extinguish the House of Valois!" and everywhere the clergy preached revolt. On New Year's Day 1589, there was a dramatic scene at the Church of Saint-Barthélemy, where the curé, Père Guincestre, called upon all present to take an oath to endeavour, "up to the last denier of their goods and the last drop of their blood," to avenge the assassinated princes. Then, espying that faithful subject of the King, Achille de Harlay, First President of the Parlement, seated opposite the pulpit, the preacher cried to him: "Raise your hand, Monsieur le Président; raise it much higher; raise it higher still, if you please, so that the people may see it." And Achille de Harlay swore, well knowing that, if he refused, he would never leave the church alive.

On January 5, the widowed Duchesse de Guise gave birth to a posthumous son. It was at once resolved that the boy should be adopted by the town of Paris, and he was carried in solemn state to Notre-Dame, where the Provost of the Merchants and the sheriffs stood sponsors, and he was baptized by the names of "Paris Alexandre de Lorraine."

After the assassination of the Duc and Cardinal de Guise, Henri III had despatched Ornano to Lyons to arrest Mayenne. But, warned in time, that prince succeeded in escaping to his government of Burgundy, which promptly rose in revolt against the King, as did the late Duc de Guise's government of Champagne. Early in February, at the earnest request of the Parisians, Mayenne proceeded to the capital, where the General

Council of the League placed the executive power and the command of the armies in his hands. On May 13, he was solemnly invested by the Parlement of Paris, now entirely under the domination of the League, with the title of Lieutenant-General of the State and Crown of France. The new government had its seal; the seal of the Kingdom of France. To these attacks upon his authority, Henri III replied by an order transferring the Parlement of Paris to Tours, whither the Court had now removed, since his Majesty did not consider himself any longer in safety at Blois. He also declared Mayenne and Aumale traitors and felons, deprived of all their charges and dignities, and despoiled of their privileges the towns which, like Amiens, Abbeville, and Orléans, had sided with Paris.

These were but feeble measures to arrest the revolt, which was spreading rapidly. Practically, all the great towns, Rouen, Lyon, Bourges, Marseilles, Toulouse, passed over in succession to the League, and few of the provinces remained faithful. Ornano succeeded in retaining Dauphiné in its allegiance; Matignon's influence assured the fidelity of Bordeaux, and Aumont's that of Angers. In the centre of the kingdom, Henri could count on the loyalty of Tours, Blois and Beaugency. The rest of France declared for the League.

The King's situation grew daily more alarming. Mayenne, advancing from Paris at the head of a considerable army, pushed as far as Chateaurenault, only seven leagues from Tours. At Saint-Ouen, near Amboise, he routed the Royalist cavalry, and took their commander, the Comte de Brienne, prisoner; and his advance-guard occupied Vendôme, which its governor surrendered without an attempt at resistance. There remained to Henri III no other resource than to appeal to the Protestants for aid; and this, on the advice of his half-sister Diane de France, the widowed Duchesse de Montmorency, he at last decided to do. The duchess herself undertook the part of negotiator, and proceeded

to the headquarters of the King of Navarre, who was now approaching the Loire, the Royalist army under Nevers which had been opposed to him having dispersed on the news of the tragedy of Blois and the revolt of Paris. As the result of his efforts, on April 30, a truce was concluded for a year, during which Navarre engaged to employ his forces "only by consent and command of his Majesty." Saumur, a strong fortress commanding the passage of the Loire and one town in each province were to be placed in the hands of the Reformers, for the free exercise of their religion and as a pledge of the King's sincerity.

The alliance between the two kings was concluded only just in time, for on May 7 Mayenne attacked and carried the Faubourg Saint-Symphorien at Tours, utterly routing the regiments of the Guards, the only troops that remained to Henri III. On the morrow, he intended to deliver his assault on the town itself, where no serious resistance could be offered him. The King had still time to make his escape; but, as usual, he hesitated. Towards nine o'clock in the evening, troops were seen approaching the town from the South. It was at first supposed that they were a reinforcement for the Leaguers, in which event the place would be completely invested, and all hope of Henri III's escape cut off. But, as they drew nearer, the hard-pressed Royalists saw, to their joy, that they wore white scarves; they were the advance-guard of the Huguenot army, under the command of Coligny's son, the gallant Châtillon. "Back, white scarves! Back, Châtillon!" cried the soldiers of Mayenne, as the Protestants took up their position between them and the town. "It is not you who are our enemies, but the murderer of your father, the traitor king, who has betrayed you once, and will betray you again." But Châtillon answered that they were rebels and traitors to their country, and that, when the service of his prince was in question, he cared not to think of private interests and wrongs. The

following day, the King of Navarre arrived in person with the rest of his forces, and before the victor of Coutras Mayenne fell back towards Paris.

The situation of affairs changed at once. Huguenots and moderate Catholics flocked to the standards of the two kings, and the war was carried towards Paris. Thoré surprised Senlis, only two leagues distant from the capital, and, in an attempt to recover it, Aumale was completely defeated in an engagement in which he himself was wounded. Harlay de Sancy, Henri III's Ambassador in Switzerland, advanced westwards with a strong force of Swiss which he had raised, the Leaguers retreating before him, and succeeding in effecting his junction with the army of the two kings, which was further strengthened by the arrival of a body of Germans. Navarre now persuaded Henri III to advance upon Paris. They captured Jargeau, Pithiviers, Étampes, and Pontoise, and made themselves masters of all the avenues leading to the capital.

The Parisians for months past had lived in a sort of frenzy. Processions of women, of children, or of scholars, paraded the town almost every day. Barefoot, and clad only in their shirts, even amidst the cold of winter, they proceeded from sanctuary to sanctuary, singing hymns or penitential psalms. Parishioners awoke their curés to make them lead nocturnal processions. The terrorism which prevailed was indescribable. Every one suspected of heresy or of Royalist sympathies was thrown into prison or subjected to the most rigorous surveillance; many persons were put to death, and a woman accused by her servant of having laughed on Ash Wednesday was arrested and narrowly escaped with her life. The bad news increased the fury of the people; the hatred of Henri III rose almost to delirium. It was reported that the garrisons who had dared to resist the King had been put to the sword or hanged. The citizens saw themselves, their goods, their wives, and their children delivered to the soldiery. The Royalists, so long sup-



pressed, began to raise their heads once more and to declare that there was not sufficient wood in Paris to furnish all the gibbets which would be erected. The rumour ran that Henri III had sent a message to Madame de Montpensier to warn her that he intended to have her burned alive, to which the princess had boldly replied that fire was not for her but for sodomites like him, and that she would make him suffer worse things before she allowed him to enter the capital.

Towards the end of July, Henri III fixed his headquarters at Saint-Cloud, while Navarre's were at Meudon, and it was decided that the assault on the capital should be delivered on August 2.

The fate of Paris appeared to be sealed, for Mayenne had only some 8,000 soldiers under him to oppose to an army of 42,000 men, and the mob of monks and students, whatever their zeal in the cause, would be of little use against the veterans of d'Épernon and Navarre. So desperate, indeed, did the Lorraine prince consider the situation that he had serious thoughts of making a sortie and selling his life as dearly as possible. The fanatics, however, refused to despair, placing their hopes of salvation in the interposition of Heaven.

Among this number was Jacques Clément, a young Jacobin monk of twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, a native of the town of Sorbonne, near Sens, ignorant and simple-minded, but passionate and bold, and subject to fits of religious ecstasy, in fact, the very stuff of which zealots are made. Since the murder of the Guises this young monk had never ceased to talk of the necessity of both clergy and laity making war upon the sacrilegious Henri III, so that his colleagues at the convent in the Rue Saint-Jacques gave him the name of "Capitaine Clément." His excitement increased with the peril of the town and the Church; he prayed, fasted, mortified the flesh, and one night saw appear before him, in the midst of a great light, an angel with a drawn sword in his hand, who informed him that he had been sent by God to announce

to him that the tyrant of France must die by his hand, and that the crown of martyrdom was reserved for his slayer. Next day, Frère Jacques consulted Père Bourgoing, the superior of his convent, told him of the apparition which had appeared to him, and inquired whether it were a mortal sin for a priest to kill a tyrant. Père Bourgoing, who probably knew a great deal more about the apparition than he would have cared to confess, replied that it would be merely an "irregular act," and encouraged his subordinate by citing the examples of Judith and Jehu.

According to Royalist writers, Frère Jacques was then placed in communication with Madame de Montpensier and with Mayenne himself. Mayenne assured him that the life of every political prisoner in Paris should answer for his; while the princess guaranteed him a cardinal's hat if he escaped, and accorded him "what was more capable of tempting a debauched monk." This imputation seems very unlikely, but there can be no doubt that the chiefs of the League were informed, either directly or indirectly, of Clément's project and did all they could to facilitate it.

When the monk's confidants were fully assured of his resolution to execute the crime, they sent him to the Comte de Brienne, who had been made prisoner at Saint-Ouen and was confined in the Louvre. Clément succeeded in persuading the count that he was devoted to the King's cause, and obtained from him a passport which would enable him to get through the Royalist lines. Furnished with this, and a forged letter of recommendation to the King in Italian, which purported to have been written by the First President Achille de Harlay, on July 31 he set out for Saint-Cloud. Arrived there, he presented himself to the Procurator-General, La Guesle, and begged him to obtain for him an audience with his Majesty, as he had a communication of great importance to make to him; and La Guesle, suspecting nothing, promised that he would do so on the morrow.



That evening, Clément supped with La Guesle's attendants, cutting his meat with a long, pointed knife which he carried, the same weapon with which he intended to rid the earth of the last Valois. The conversation turned on the furious hatred which the monks entertained against the King, and one of those present inquired whether Clément knew that six members of his own Order had taken an oath to kill his Majesty. The monk, without changing countenance, coldly replied that there were good and bad everywhere.

He slept soundly—so soundly that he had to be awakened when at seven o'clock next morning La Guesle came to conduct him to the King. On learning that there was a monk with important news from Paris awaiting his pleasure, Henri III gave orders that he should be at once admitted; and La Guesle brought Clément into the royal bedchamber and presented him to the King, whom they found with Bellegarde, his Grand Equerry. The monk begged that he might be permitted to speak to the King in private, as the information which he had brought was for the royal ear alone; and Henri thereupon directed La Guesle and Bellegarde to withdraw, and taking the forged letter which Clément handed to him, began to read it. Then the monk, drawing the knife from his sleeve, stabbed the King in the lower part of the stomach.

With a cry of "The wicked monk has killed me!" Henri snatched the knife from the wound and struck the assassin with it above the left eyebrow. La Guesle rushed in, sword in hand, and found Clément standing with his back to his victim, with his arms extended in the form of a cross, calmly awaiting his fate. It was soon decided, for La Guesle, beside himself with rage, instead of arresting him, promptly ran him through with his sword, and some of the *Quarante-cinq*, who had followed the Procurator-General into the room, finished the work which he had begun.

At first, the surgeons did not consider the wound a

mortal one, and assured the King that in ten days he would be able to mount his horse. But towards evening he became very ill, and it was recognised that his case was hopeless. On the following morning, Henri of Navarre, who had been summoned from Meudon, arrived at Saint-Cloud. The dying monarch embraced him, and recognised him as his successor, at the same time entreating him to become a Catholic. He then prepared for the end, expressing great contrition for his sins and receiving absolution twice; and about midday expired, at the age of thirty-eight.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

Henri IV and Mayenne—Battles of Arques and Ivry—Siege of Paris—Escape of the young Duc de Guise from Tours—His letter to Philip II—The King of Spain intrigues to secure the recognition of his daughter, the Infanta Clara Eugenia, as Queen of France—The Sixteen cause Brisson, First President of the Parlement of Paris, and two other magistrates to be hanged—Punishment of the Sixteen by Mayenne and triumph of the moderate party in the League—Futile negotiations—The Duc de Guise in Normandy—His reverses at Bures and Yvetot—He receives a challenge to a duel from Sir Henry Unton, Elizabeth's Ambassador to Henri IV, but ignores it—The Spanish party eager for a marriage between him and the Infanta—The States-General of 1593—Resolution of the Estates and propositions of Philip II's representatives—Mayenne succeeds in checkmating the ambitions of his nephew—Henri IV embraces the Catholic faith—Surrender of Paris—Guise decides to make his peace with the King—He assassinates with his own hand the Maréchal de Saint-Paul at Rheims—He is appointed Governor of Provence and Admiral of the Levant, and does good service in the Royal cause—Mayenne solicits his pardon—Extraordinary leniency with which he is treated—The "vengeance" of the King—He becomes a loyal subject of Henri IV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the oath of fidelity to Henri of Navarre which the dying monarch had exacted from them, many of the Catholic nobles refused to recognise the new King, who, finding himself abandoned by a part of his army, raised the blockade of Paris and led the bulk of the forces that remained to him into Normandy. The throne was now vacant *de facto*, and, since the new Duc de Guise, a youth of seventeen, was a prisoner at Tours and likely to remain there indefinitely, the partisans of the House of Guise and his sister, Madame de Montpensier, urged Mayenne to seize it. That prince, however, could not bring himself to take this bold step. It was not the desire to become King which failed him, but audacity and genius. An able man in some respects, a skilful politician, an experienced captain, he was destitute of that power of initiative so essential

to revolutionary leaders, and was far more fitted to fill a distinguished position under a regular government than to reign in the midst of turmoil. His ambition was not ardent enough to blind him to the obstacles which he would have to encounter. He understood and appreciated the jealousy of his own relatives, the opposition of Spain, the pretensions of the elder branch of the House of Lorraine and of the Duke of Savoy, and the engagements which bound the League to the Cardinal de Bourbon; and he feared that an attempt to possess himself of the Crown would be the signal for the whole confederacy to fall to pieces. In accord with Philip II's agent Mendoza, he therefore resolved to proclaim the Cardinal de Bourbon King, under the title of Charles X, a decision which adjourned the question at issue without in any way changing the situation, since the old cardinal, who was almost moribund, was, like the young Duc de Guise, a prisoner of Henri IV. He himself preserved the direction of affairs and the title of Lieutenant-General of the realm, and, anxious to take advantage of the dissensions which the change of sovereigns had caused amongst those hostile to the League, lost no time in marching against Henri IV, who had retired into the strong position of Arques, near Dieppe.

However, he was neither able to bring the Royalists to an engagement in the plain nor to carry their entrenchments, and, after eleven days of futile assaults (September 15-27), he fell back on Amiens. Five weeks later, he was obliged to return in all haste to Paris to defend the capital against Henri IV, who, by a sudden attack, had captured the five faubourgs on the left bank of the Seine. He forced the King to retire, but it was evident that, without substantial assistance from Spain, the League would have great difficulty in maintaining its ground against its energetic adversary.

During the winter, Mayenne endeavoured to strengthen his position in Paris, by introducing into the Council of

the League men upon whose loyalty to himself he could rely, with the object of moderating the violence of the Sixteen and their adherents. He also summoned thither Villeroy and the Président Jeannin and convoked the States-General for the following February at Melun. But the war prevented the meeting of the Estates.

Having received reinforcements from Flanders and Lorraine, he took the field again against Henri IV, only to be completely defeated by him in the plain of Ivry, near the Eure (March 14, 1590) and obliged to fall back in haste to Paris. He had lost in these two campaigns much of his military reputation. "My cousin of Mayenne," observed Henri IV, "is a great captain, but I get up earlier in the morning than he does."

Being unwilling to shut himself up in the town, Mayenne announced to the inhabitants that he was going to Flanders to raise a new army and urged them to defend themselves until his return. They promised to do so, and kept their promise with an obstinacy that has remained celebrated.

While the Parisians were enduring one of the most horrible sieges of which history makes mention, Mayenne was endeavouring to procure from Parma, the Governor of the Netherlands, the reinforcements required to save the capital. After great difficulty and much delay, he was furnished with several thousand men, and on June 17 succeeded in introducing a convoy into Paris; but it was not until Parma joined him with his army at the end of August that the siege was raised and the town revictualled. Little of importance occurred during the autumn and winter, but in April 1591, Henri IV contrived to deal the League a severe blow by the capture of Châlons-sur-Marne, which was regarded as the granary of Paris. The taking of Château-Thierry by Mayenne was but poor compensation for this reverse.

The whole country was by this time utterly weary of civil war. The "common people," writes L'Estoile, "wished the Duc de Mayenne and the war at the devil,

and began no longer to care who won, provided that they were left in repose." Mayenne, who neither wished to see the country dismembered nor delivered to a Spanish princess, was disposed to negotiate with Henri IV. But the fanatical Leaguers and the partisans of Spain, in order to prevent any arrangement, obtained from Gregory XIV a Bull which renewed the excommunication pronounced against Henri IV and launched anathemas against his adherents. Mayenne wished to suspend the publication of this Bull, but his hand was forced by the Nuncio, Mendoça, and the Sixteen (May and June 1591).

In August, a new personage appeared upon the scene. The young Duc de Guise, although watched continually at Tours, "*voire mesme allant à la garde-robe*,"<sup>1</sup> had resolved to endeavour to effect his escape. He counted on the protection of Our Lady of Loretto, to whom he had vowed a pilgrimage, and on the cabalistic chances which designated the month of August as singularly propitious for the Guise family. But his agility was of more service to him.

On the Day of the Assumption, he received Holy Communion, and afterwards breakfasted, in company with one Pénard, an exempt of the Guards, whose turn it was to escort him that day. On rising from table, he challenged Pénard to a hopping-race up the staircase of the tower. That officer, suspecting nothing, laughingly accepted, and was, of course, soon lagging far behind. Arrived at the door at the top of the staircase leading to the platform of the tower, Guise passed through it, closed and locked it against Pénard, and, running along the platform, attached a stout cord which had been brought him the evening before concealed within a lute to the battlements, and lowered himself into the Cher. The sentries, warned by the cries of Pénard, fired their arquebuses at him; but their aim was bad—perhaps intentionally—and he gained the opposite bank in safety. There he met a man on horseback. He stopped him,

<sup>1</sup> Pasquier, *Lettres*.



pulled him out of the saddle, and, mounting in his place, galloped off. After going some little distance, he encountered a troop of horsemen whom La Châtre had sent from Bourges to assist him, and, escorted by them, reached that town in safety.

The young prince's first act was to write to Philip II that "he regarded himself as his instrument." Hardly free, he sought the master under whom his father had served: "I desire that my actions should depend upon the wishes of His Majesty, as it is my intention to undertake nothing without his express commands, and to attempt only what he may be pleased to command his creature, dependent upon his will and clemency alone."

Philip, however, had other confederates who inspired him with more confidence and seemed to him less costly to keep than the son of "*le Balafré*." The members of the Commune of Paris had proposed, in the Council of the League, to declare the King of Spain protector of France, and had introduced into the capital a Spanish arrison of 4,000 men. On September 10, 1591, the Commune of Paris and the doctors of the Sorbonne wrote to Philip: "The wishes and desires of all the Catholics are to see your Catholic Majesty holding the sceptre of this crown and reigning over us, as we throw ourselves very willingly into his arms as our father, or that he will be pleased to establish here one of his posterity."

"One of his posterity" meant the Infanta Clara Eugenia, Philip's daughter by Élisabeth de France, whose recognition as Queen of France the autocrat of the Escorial was intriguing to obtain, notwithstanding the impediment of the Salic Law.

The Sixteen, egged on by Aubry, Lapetellier, Boucher, Poncet and other fanatical curés, who had become like little kings in their respective parishes, dreamed of a new St. Bartholomew against the moderate party of the League, and, meantime, caused Brisson, First President of the Parlement and a jurist of European reputation, and two other magistrates, Larcher and Tardif,



who had opposed the designs of the Spanish party, to be hanged (November 15, 1591). At the news of this atrocious crime, Mayenne, who was at Laon, hastened to Paris, which he entered on November 28. The Sixteen, after a show of resistance, surrendered, and Mayenne, after causing four of them to be executed, restored the command of the militia to the officers who had been dismissed by the Sixteen and reorganised the Parlement.

Thus, the moderate party triumphed, but its triumph involved the mutilation of the League, which was no longer capable of maintaining the struggle against Henri IV, unless by an entire surrender to Spain. Mayenne, aware of this, began to think of peace, but the conditions which he transmitted to Henri IV, through the President Jeannin, would have meant the virtual dismemberment of France in favour of the House of Guise, and were promptly rejected (May 1572).

In the campaign in Normandy in 1572, the young Duc de Guise made his first appearance in the field, but his fiery ardour was as detrimental to the success of the forces of the League and of Spain, which were now under the command of Parma, as the excessive caution and slowness of Mayenne. Disputes between the uncle and nephew were of frequent occurrence, and the general of Philip II was several times obliged to intervene. Having learned that Rouen, closely besieged by Henri IV, was likely to surrender, unless assistance arrived quickly, Guise, remembering how his father and grandfather had laid the foundations of their military reputations by saving Poitiers and Metz respectively, demanded permission to throw himself into the town with 1,000 men. But Mayenne wished to reserve for himself the honour of saving Rouen, and the dispute was only ended by Parma forbidding either of them to interfere with his strategic operations.

It must be confessed that the young Duc de Guise was not very fortunate when entrusted with a command.

He was badly beaten in an engagement at Bures, and not long afterwards his troops were surprised and routed by Henri IV at Yvetot. In covering their retreat, Parma was wounded in the arm by a ball from an arquebus, and died six weeks later, from the fever which supervened.

More humiliating than a defeat was the refusal of a duel.

In the spring of 1592, Sir Henry Unton, Elizabeth's Ambassador to Henry IV, being informed that the young prince had spoken "impudently, lightly, and overboldly" of his royal mistress, sent him a challenge to mortal combat, proposing to meet him with whatever arms he might choose, on horseback or on foot. "Nor would I have you to think," he wrote, "any inequality of person between us, I being issued of as great a race and as noble a house every way as yourself. . . . If you consent not to meet me, I will hold, and cause you to be generally held, for the errantist coward and most slanderous slave that lives in all France."

Perhaps, Guise considered it beneath the dignity of a prince who aspired to the Crown of France to accept a challenge from one so far below him in rank; perhaps, he had little inclination to face this fire-eating diplomatist. Any way, he ignored the challenge, which is said to have been three times repeated, and his behaviour appears to have created a very bad impression.

Henri de Lorraine had been, as we know, one of the handsomest men of his time; but his eldest son had not inherited his good looks any more than he had his abilities, being short and slightly built, while his features were spoiled by a flat nose. Nevertheless, he enjoyed considerable popularity in Paris, and the Spanish party was eager for a marriage between him and the Infanta.

As for Philip II, he considered the success of his designs in France so well assured that he refused to Mendoça part of the money which his trusted agent

demanding to corrupt the skeleton of a States-General—128 deputies only—which assembled in Paris at the beginning of 1593, for the purpose of choosing a King to succeed the old Cardinal de Bourbon, who had died in May 1590. Notwithstanding bribes and promises and the clever casuistry of the Spanish agents, he failed in his attempt to obtain the recognition of his daughter as Queen or to induce them to elect the Archduke Ernest, brother of the Emperor Rudolph, whom he intended as the husband of the Infanta, though on June 20 the Estates adopted a resolution, praying his Catholic Majesty “to approve of the selection of one of our princes to be King and to honour him, both for the good of Christianity and of this realm, by giving him in marriage the Most Serene Infanta, his daughter.”

The representatives of Spain, however, refused to abandon the rights of the Infanta, and proposed that she and the French princes should be declared “*roys propriétaires* of the Crown *in solidum*,” and that Philip II should then select her husband from amongst them.

This proposal was by no means pleasing to Mayenne, who had no intention of leaving to Philip the advantage of choosing a King, being aware that his decision would probably be in favour of the Duc de Guise, rather than of his own eldest son, the Duc d’Aiguillon. Not venturing openly to oppose it, he encouraged the Parlement, very hostile to Spain, to issue a decree which forbade the transmission of the Crown of France to foreign princes or princesses, and made use of this act to adjourn indefinitely the election of a sovereign.

On July 23, 1593, Henri IV, after listening to a five hours’ discourse from the Archbishop of Bourges, declared himself convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion, and signed a profession of faith. On the following Sunday, after provisional absolution by the archbishop, he heard Mass at Saint-Denis.

The act was speedily justified by its results. The bulk of the nation, weary of war and disgusted by the

subservience of the League to Spain, turned eagerly towards him, and city after city laid their keys at his feet. Mayenne, feeling the ground trembling beneath his feet, and fearing that he would not have time to conclude an advantageous peace, drew closer to the Spaniards, who encouraged him by the hope that Philip would marry the Infanta to his son, strengthened the garrison of Paris, re-established the Council of Sixteen, banished some of the most prominent members of the moderate party, and replaced the governor Belin, who had not hesitated to say that he was French and not Spanish, and that the time had come to make peace, by Brissac, the hero of the Barricades.

On March 6, the duke left Paris, and, having placed his family in safety at Laon, proceeded to Brussels to concert measures with the Spaniards. On the 22nd, Brissac, whose actions were dictated by an intelligent regard for his own interests, and who had been secretly negotiating with the Royalists for some little time, surrendered the city to Henri IV, who had been crowned at Chartres on February 27.

Mayenne, having failed to make peace in time, had no alternative but to continue the struggle, which was every day becoming more hopeless. As for Guise, irritated by the manner in which his uncle had thwarted his ambitions, he thought less of serving his party than of maintaining his authority in his government of Champagne, in order to render more advantageous the terms of an accommodation which his mother was already negotiating with the King.

Moved by similar considerations, Saint-Paul, a soldier of fortune and *protégé* of "*le Balafre*," whom Mayenne had appointed commandant of the province during the captivity of his nephew and created a *maréchal de France*, had been endeavouring to make himself redoubtable and independent there. With this object, he had gradually increased the garrison of Rheims far beyond its normal strength, had constructed a sort of



CHARLES DE LORRAINE, DUC DE MAYENNE.



citadel at the Porte Mars, and had infringed the rights and ignored the orders of the son of his former benefactor. The complaints of the townsfolk in regard to the arbitrary measures and the exactions of Saint-Paul increased the indignation of Guise and determined him to take steps to repress this enterprising personage without delay. On April 25, he arrived at Rheims, accompanied by François d'Esparbès de Lussan (afterwards Vicomte d'Aubeterre and *maréchal de France*), and five or six other gentlemen, and, meeting Saint-Paul in front of the Church of Saint-Pierre, abruptly demanded of him why he had increased the garrison of the town without his knowledge. Saint-Paul, who was surrounded by his guards, adopted a defiant tone; answered that he had done so in order to checkmate certain secret machinations which had come to his knowledge; and when the duke retorted angrily that he, as governor of the province, ought to have been consulted first, and that he should know how to teach him obedience and how to punish such "cunning tricks," observed haughtily that he had merely performed his duty, and that marshals of France were not subordinate to provincial governors, at the same time laying his hand upon his sword. He had not time to draw it, however, even if such were his intention, for Guise, beside himself with anger, promptly whipped out his own, ran him through the body and stretched him dead at his feet. Then he promptly announced to the bystanders that he had killed Saint-Paul because he had learned that he was preparing to deliver the town to the Spaniards. This explanation was readily accepted, and shouts of "*Vive Guise!*" resounded on all sides. The duke, as his father had done on a certain memorable occasion, bade the people shout: "*Vive le Roi!*" thus foreshadowing the line of action which he had decided to take.<sup>1</sup>

In point of fact, at the end of the following October, he made his peace with the King, surrendering his post

<sup>1</sup> Oudin, *Histoire MSS. de la Maison de Guise*, cited by Bouillé.

of Grand Master, which Henri IV very wisely considered too dangerous to be held by a member of this ambitious and turbulent family, and his government of Champagne, and receiving in exchange the government of Provence and the appointment of Admiral of the Levant, with pensions amounting to 400,000 livres and the privilege of maintaining four companies of gendarmes or guards. He also received the archbishopric of Rheims and five fat abbeys, together with pensions to a considerable amount, for his younger brothers. The Duke of Lorraine, following the example of his young kinsman, abandoned the League, disbanded his army, and restored Toul and Verdun to France for 900,000 crowns. Elbeuf had already succeeded in driving an advantageous bargain with his sovereign.

The Lorraine family, as we know, imagined that their descent from King René gave them an hereditary claim to Provence, which was as much exposed to Spanish aggression as Champagne. The majority, therefore, of Henri's counsellors protested against the policy of entrusting it to a young man whom the King's enemies had put forward as a pretender to the throne. But the event proved the wisdom of Henri's choice. Guise, though young and impetuous, was not without a reserve of sober sense, and the prestige of his name was just what was needed to counterbalance the influence of d'Épernon, who had succeeded in making himself almost an independent sovereign in Provence. On learning of Guise's appointment as governor, d'Épernon hastened to make a treaty with Philip II, and persuaded the Leaguer magistrates of Marseilles to follow his example. Marseilles, the great port between Barcelona and Genoa, had long been an object of Spanish ambition; and a Spanish fleet under Carlo Doria was already in the harbour, when, on February 17, 1596, a conspiracy and a rising concerted between Guise and the inhabitants drove the Spaniards and their supporters from the town. After this, Guise took the field against d'Épernon,



who was soon constrained to make his peace with the King.

Although Guise and Elbeuf had made their submission, and the Duke of Lorraine had concluded a treaty with the King, Mayenne, Aumale, and Mercœur still remained in arms. These nobles, although they could no longer hope to deprive Henri IV of the Crown, still trusted that they might succeed in converting their governments of Burgundy, Picardy, and Brittany into hereditary and independent principalities. The support of Spain gave them encouragement and strength to continue the revolt, and the fact that the King was still unabsolved by Clement VIII furnished them with a pretext. However, after many delays, on September 17, 1598, the Papal absolution was at last accorded, and on October 28 following Mayenne wrote to the King to solicit his pardon and to inform him that "he desired to think of nothing further than to be faithful and to serve him as an obedient subject."

The King made the chief of the League the largest concessions. By the Treaty of Folembray (January 1596), he accorded him three places of surety: Châlon-sur-Saône, Seurre, and Soissons, the government of the Ile-de-France, with the exception of Paris, and an indemnity of 2,640,000 livres. The terms of the edict were very remarkable. Mayenne was praised for not having, either in good or in evil fortune, permitted the dismemberment of the realm, and his conduct was excused on the ground of his zeal for his religion; while the King protested that he would live and die in the Catholic Faith, and that "it was his intention to procure in the future the welfare and advancement of the Catholic religion with the same care and affection as had his predecessors." It was the justification of Mayenne and the League.

The Parlement remonstrated against the extraordinary leniency with which Mayenne had been treated, which is probably explained by the fact that he had been astute

enough to secure the intercession of Gabrielle d'Estrées, by promising that, in the event of the King's death, he would support the claims of her son, the infant Duc de Vendôme, to the throne.

Mayenne's first interview with the King after his submission took place at the Château of Monceaux, near Meaux. Henri IV was walking with Rosny, afterwards Duc de Sully, in the park, when Mayenne approached, and, falling on one knee, assured his Majesty of his fidelity, and thanked him "for having delivered him from Spanish arrogance and Italian trickery." The King raised him up, embraced him affectionately, and then, taking him by the arm, set off to show him the improvements he was making in the park.

"The King," writes Sully, "walked so fast that the Duc de Mayenne, greatly incommoded by his sciatica, his corpulence, and the great heat of the day, could only keep up with him with great difficulty, and suffered cruelly, without daring to complain. The King perceived it, and, seeing the duke flushed and perspiring, turned towards Rosny and whispered in his ear: 'If I drag this big body much farther with me, I shall be cheaply avenged of all the evil that he has done us.' Then he said to the duke: 'Tell the truth, my cousin; I am walking a little too fast for you?' The duke replied that he was ready to faint, and that if his Majesty had gone farther, he would have killed him unintentionally. 'Shake hands, my cousin,' rejoined the King gaily, embracing him again and clapping him on the shoulder, 'For, *pardieu!* I have now taken all the vengeance that I shall ever take of you.' The Duc de Mayenne, charmed with such gaiety and kindness, endeavoured to kneel and kiss the hand which his Majesty extended to him, swearing that he would serve him henceforth even against his own children. 'Well, I believe it,' said Henri, 'and so that you may love me and serve me longer, go and rest and refresh yourself in the château, for you very much need to do so. I am going to give you two bottles

of Arbois wine, for I know that you don't dislike it, and Rosny here shall go with you to do the honours of the house and show you your room.' ''<sup>1</sup>

Ambitious and unscrupulous though he was, Mayenne possessed plenty of good sense. When he wrote to the King that he desired to be faithful and to serve him as an obedient subject, he was perfectly sincere. Having played the game of conspiracy and treason and lost, he was too wise to have any wish to return to it when the chances of success were infinitely less favourable; and throughout the remainder of Henri's reign he served him faithfully and proved inaccessible to the intrigues of Biron and the Jesuits. His death in 1611, the year following the King's assassination, was a distinct loss to the State.

<sup>1</sup> Sully, *Œconomies royales*.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

The Duc de Guise under the regency of Marie de' Medici—He intrigues against Richelieu, and after the Day of Dupes deems it prudent to retire to Italy—His death—Claude de Lorraine, Duc de Chevreuse—His affray with the Duc de Bellegarde—The Cardinal Louis de Lorraine—The Chevalier de Guise—His duels with the Barons de Luz, *père et fils*—His tragic end—Henri II de Lorraine, fourth Duc de Guise—His amorous escapades—His marriage to Anne de Gonzague—He joins the revolt of the Comte de Soissons, and is executed in effigy for high reason—He repudiates his wife and marries the widowed Comtesse de Bossu, whom he presently repudiates in her turn—He is pardoned, and his estates are restored to him—He joins the faction of the "*Importants*"—His duel with Maurice de Coligny in the middle of the Place-Royale—His extraordinary infatuation for Mlle de Pons—His expedition to Naples—He is made prisoner by the Spaniards—His base conduct—His rupture with Mlle de Pons—His second Neapolitan adventure—His death—The last Guises.

THE minority of Louis XIII afforded the princes and great nobles an opportunity for aggrandizing themselves at the expense of the feeble government of Marie de' Medici of which they were not slow to take advantage. In the first days of the Regency, the Duc de Guise received a *gratification* of 200,000 livres from the Queen-mother, naturally anxious to secure his support, and permission to marry Catherine Henriette de Joyeuse, daughter of the celebrated Henri de Joyeuse, and widow of the Duc de Montpensier, who passed at that time for the greatest heiress in France, and whose daughter by her first husband subsequently married Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, Louis XIII's younger brother. Notwithstanding his revenue and pensions and his wife's wealth, Guise lived in such regal style that he was nearly always embarrassed for money, and not long afterwards we find the Regent making him another *gratification*, this time of 300,000 livres.

In return for the favours conferred upon him, Guise

gave his support to the Queen-mother and her Florentine confidant Concini. When, in 1615, the alliance between France and Spain—that is to say, the subordination of France to Spanish interests—was concluded, he was chosen to proceed to Burgos to espouse by procuration the young Queen, Anne of Austria. Two years later, he was given the command of the Royal army against the revolted nobles, when he found himself opposed to the Duc de Nevers, with whom, ever since the beginning of the Regency, he had been perpetually at variance on questions of precedence. Guise conducted his campaign against this personal enemy with vigour and considerable success, captured Richecourt, Château-Porcien, and Rethel, and held him besieged in Mézières, the while the Royalists were reducing his strongholds in the Nivernais.

Guise expected that these somewhat facile triumphs would be recompensed by further pensions and honours; but the assassination of Concini, the departure of the Queen-mother for Blois, and the rise of the enterprising and energetic Luynes to power disappointed his hopes. During the favour of Luynes, the duke caballed persistently against him, and his joy was great when the Minister died at the end of 1621.

But the period when princes and great nobles could bargain for pensions and governments as the price of their loyalty was at an end. Power passed into the hands of Richelieu, who was not the man to tolerate opposition, even from the greatest in the land. At first, the cardinal endeavoured to make use of the duke, and employed him with his Mediterranean galleys at the siege of La Rochelle, where Guise rendered good service. Had the latter possessed sufficient acumen to gauge the character of the man with whom he had to deal, all might have been well; but, being unable to believe in the permanence of Richelieu's favour, he intrigued with the friends of the Queen-mother and irritated the Minister by his pretensions. Summoned to Court after the Day of Dupes, he deemed it more prudent to ask

permission to make his long-deferred pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Loretto. He was allowed to go, and his voluntary exile lasted until his death in 1640. "I am where I am," he wrote to his friend the Maréchal de Bassompierre, at that time a prisoner in the Bastille, "in order that I may not be where you are." He was probably correct as to the fate which awaited him in France; Richelieu had no use for such selfish intriguers as Charles de Lorraine.

Guise's three younger brothers were also prominent figures in the early years of Louis XIII's reign, though the part they played did not redound much to the credit of the family. The eldest of the three, Claude de Lorraine, known at first by the title of Prince de Joinville, distinguished himself, in his youth, at the sieges of La Fère (1596) and Amiens (1598). Though brave, he was, like all the sons of Henri I, Duc de Guise, of a very violent temper, and one night in August 1599, when the courtiers were leaving Henri IV's *coucher*, he accused the Grand Equerry, the Duc de Bellegarde, of "having made evil reports of him to the King."<sup>1</sup> Bellegarde denied the accusation, upon which Joinville drew his sword and wounded the Grand Equerry below the hip, "the point coming out above the knee."<sup>2</sup> He then made a second thrust at him, but this Bellegarde parried with his hand and stepped back into the King's apartments, whither his assailant did not dare to pursue him. For this outrage Joinville was arrested and obliged to apologize to the Grand Equerry, and, when released, advised to go to Hungary, to exercise his ardour against the Turks. On his return, he was mixed up in the intrigues of the King's mistress, Henriette d'Entragues, Marquise de Verneuil, with whom he is believed to have been on

<sup>1</sup> MSS. de Béthune, cited by Bouillé. The "evil reports" probably related to the attentions which Joinville was paying to Henriette d'Entragues, of whom the King was desperately enamoured, though that astute damsel had not yet consented to become his Majesty's mistress.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



terms rather warmer than friendship. In 1619, he was created Duc de Chevreuse by Louis XIII, and rehabilitated himself under this new incarnation by the courage and military skill he displayed in the campaign of 1620-21 against the Protestants. In 1622, he married the beautiful Marie de Rohan, daughter of the Duc de Montbazon and widow of the Connétable de Luynes, so celebrated for her gallantries and her intrigues against Richelieu and Mazarin.<sup>1</sup> The Duc de Chevreuse was a very handsome and distinguished-looking man—"l'homme de la meilleure mine qu' on pouvoit voir," says Tallemant des Réaux—and a brave soldier; but he had little ability, was recklessly extravagant, and of very dissolute morals, which explains and, in some measure, extenuates the irregularities of his wife. He died in 1657, without leaving any children, his daughter Charlotte de Lorraine, Mlle de Chevreuse, whom her intriguing mother had used without scruple as a pawn in her political game during the Fronde, having died five years earlier.

The next brother, Louis de Lorraine, being destined for the Church, found himself, at the tender age of nine years, in possession of the abbey of Saint-Denis, Monstier-en-Der, Châlis, Cluny, Corbie, Orcamp and Saint-Urbain de Châlons. Subsequently, without ever having been consecrated, he took the title of Archbishop of Rheims and enjoyed the honours of the peerage, and in December 1615 was created a cardinal. He embraced the ecclesiastical state much against his will, since he was infinitely more fitted to adorn the profession of arms, and all his inclinations tended in that direction. One day, when he had proposed to confer an abbey upon one of his natural sons by Charlotte des Essarts, Comtesse de Romorantin, formerly mistress of Henri IV, the Duc de Nevers raised objections, upon which his Eminence challenged him to a duel. The two adversaries were actually on the field of battle, when Louis XIII caused

<sup>1</sup> See the author's "A Fair Conspirator" (London, Methuen; New York, Scribner, 1913).



the cardinal to be arrested and conducted to the Bastille and thence to the Château of Vincennes, where he was kept in confinement for some days. In 1621, he followed the King in the campaign against the Protestants of Poitou, and died of an illness which he had contracted at the siege of Saint-Jean-d'Angély. By Charlotte des Essarts, with whom he is said to have contracted a secret marriage in 1611, he had five children: three sons and two daughters. One of the former, Charles Louis de Lorraine, became Bishop of Condom; another, Achille, Comte de Romorantin, was killed in Crete, fighting against the Turks; while the youngest daughter, Louise, married in 1639 Claude Pot, Seigneur de Rhodes.

Louis Alexandre Paris de Lorraine, the posthumous son of "*le Balafre*," to whom, it will be remembered, the town of Paris had stood sponsor, and who was known as the Chevalier de Guise, was of an even more bellicose disposition than his elder brothers, which is scarcely a matter for surprise, seeing that one of the chosen companions of his youth was the notorious *bretteur* Balagny, of whom Lord Herbert of Cherbury speaks in his Memoirs. Towards the end of 1612, the chevalier was informed that the Baron de Luz, a gentleman of Concini's suite and Lieutenant-General of Burgundy, had boasted that, twenty-four years earlier, he had intercepted a message which warned the Duc de Guise of Henri III's plans for his assassination. Faithful to the sentiment of vengeance which the Guises transmitted from father to son, early in the afternoon of January 5, 1613, the young man stopped Luz as he was riding in his coach through the Rue de Grenelle, and, alighting from his horse, cried: "I have a word to say to you; get down." Luz, though well aware of the reason of this abrupt summons, preserved his composure, and, getting out of his coach and approaching Guise, with his hand on the hilt of his sword, said: "Well, my master, what do you want with your servant?" "Is it not true," inquired the young prince furiously, "that you have been so

rash as to boast in good company that you were a consenting party to the murder of my father, inasmuch as, when you might have warned him, you preferred to let him die? Now, it is *your* turn to die."

The baron would have attempted some explanation, but the other cut him short, saying: "I have not come here to listen to speeches. Draw your sword, or you are a dead man!"

The combat began, and, after a few passes, Guise ran his adversary through the heart, killing him instantly.

Such is the account of this affair given by Oudin, in his unpublished history of the Guises; but, according to Tallemant des Réaux and other contemporary writers, Guise ran the baron through before the latter had had time to draw his own sword.

Duel or assassination, the affair caused an immense sensation. The Regent was furious, for Luz had been in high favour; but the Parlement was unwilling to adjudicate upon the matter, and, "fearing that this trouble might give rise to other troubles, she was persuaded to accord him [the Chevalier de Guise] her pardon, and not to show any further resentment against his family."<sup>1</sup>

There was, however, another person who was very far from disposed to allow the affair to rest. This was the dead man's only son, a high-spirited youth of nineteen or twenty, and an expert swordsman. Very early on the morning of January 31, the Chevalier de Guise, who was still in bed, received a visit from a M. de Rolliet, a gentleman of Burgundy, who had formerly been in the service of the late Baron de Luz as page. This gentleman was the bearer of a formal challenge from the young baron inviting Guise to meet him in mortal combat forthwith, at a spot outside the walls, to which Rolliet would conduct him. Springing out of bed, Guise dressed in haste, and, summoning a friend, the Chevalier de Grignan, to accompany him as his second, mounted his

<sup>1</sup> Fontenay-Mareuil.

horse and followed Rolliet through the Porte Saint-Antoine to a spot near Chavanne, where the young Baron de Luz was impatiently awaiting them.

Stripping to their shirts and without dismounting from their horses, the two principals at once crossed swords, while their seconds followed their example. Grignan proved no match for Rolliet, and was soon lying on the ground, severely wounded; but between Guise and Luz there was little to choose in the matter of swordsmanship, though the former would appear to have been the better horseman, and the combat between them was long and desperate. At length, after both had been several times wounded, Guise succeeded in giving his adversary a mortal thrust, and the unfortunate youth fell dead from his horse.

The victor then proceeded to the neighbouring convent of Saint-François de Picpus to obtain assistance for his wounded second, whom he caused to be carried to the Hôtel de Guise, whither he rode himself, all covered with blood as he was. Later in the day, the Regent sent one of her gentlemen to congratulate the chevalier on his bravery and good fortune. The King did the same on the morrow. A few years later, when Richelieu was in power, M. de Guise, instead of receiving the felicitations of royalty, would probably have been sent to the Bastille, or banished from France.

In May of the following year, Guise was appointed Lieutenant-General of the King in Provence. On his way to Marseilles, he stopped for a night at the Château des Baux, near Arles. On the morrow, before continuing his journey, he amused himself by firing a cannon at a target placed on a rock. At the fourth shot, the cannon, which, in spite of the warnings of his host, he had insisted on loading to the muzzle, burst, inflicting such terrible injuries that he expired a few hours later. "This fatal accident," Fontenay-Mareuil tells us, was "attributed by many persons to a judgment upon him for the blood of the two Barons de Luz which he had shed."

According to Tallemant des Réaux, the Chevalier de Guise was "brave, handsome, and well-made, and, although of very limited intelligence, his family, his agreeable manners, his valour, and his kindness of heart (for he was very charitable), caused him to be beloved by every one."

Charles, Duc de Guise, was succeeded by his second son Henri, his eldest son, the Prince de Joinville having died in 1639. Being a younger son, Henri de Lorraine had been destined from his birth for the Church; four abbeys were conferred upon him before he left his cradle, and at fifteen he was titular Archbishop of Rheims and in possession of revenues amounting to over 400,000 livres.

Never was there a person more unfitted for an archiepiscopal career; his life would have been an occasion for scandal even in the Italy of the Borgias. Not content with lay mistresses, amongst whom may be mentioned Madame de Joyeuse and Mlle Villars, an actress, to please whom the youthful prelate wore yellow silk stockings under his cassock, yellow being the lady's favourite colour, he availed himself of the facilities which his office afforded him to make love to the brides of Heaven; and the discipline of at least one convent in his diocese was completely subverted by the interest which his Grace affected in the welfare of its inmates. In the course of his pastoral visits to the Abbey of Avenay, he became enamoured of one of the younger daughters of the Duc de Nevers, Anne de Gonzague, the future Princess Palatine, so celebrated during the Fronde, who was a *pensionnaire* in that institution, of which her eldest sister was abbess. Anne returned the archiepiscopal affection, and Guise eventually succeeded in overcoming her scruples by a written promise of marriage, couched in the most gallant style and written in his own blood:

"To the incomparable and adorable Princess Orante. I, the undersigned Henri de Lorraine, prompted by the

extreme passion that I have to honour and serve the very generous and very virtuous Princess Madame Anne de Gonzague, swear and protest never to love or espouse any other person than her. And, for the greater security, I have sent her the present promise written and signed in my blood, June 29, 1636."

The young princess was subsequently stricken with remorse, for, two years later, Guise obliged one of his canons of Rheims to celebrate a marriage between them in the chapel of the Hôtel de Nevers, which the lady, at any rate, appears to have considered binding.

On the death of his father in 1640, Henri left his archbishopric, assumed the title of Duc de Guise, and, irritated by the action of Richelieu, who, on the ground that a man could not justly desire to be at once a priest and a husband, had sought to deprive him of his ecclesiastical benefices, threw himself into the revolt of the Comte de Soissons.

On the suppression of this revolt, he fled to Brussels, where he learned that, on September 6, 1641—just a year after he had become head of his House—he had been condemned to death and executed in effigy for high treason, and that all his estates had been confiscated. Anne de Gonzague remained faithful to him in his disgrace, and followed him to Brussels, only to find that her unworthy prince had repudiated their marriage and contracted another matrimonial union with Honorine de Grimberg, the beautiful and "richly left" widow of Albert d'Hénin, Comte de Bossu, which had been duly solemnised by the Archbishop of Malines.<sup>1</sup>

Two years passed, and then the duke, who was the most

<sup>1</sup> The unfortunate termination of her romance with the Duc de Guise might have ruined a woman of less strength of character; but Anne de Gonzague accepted her fate with that good sense and firmness which always distinguished her, and finding it impossible to persuade the duke to acknowledge her as his wife, resumed her maiden name, reappeared at Court and, in 1645, married Edward of Bavaria, one of the numerous sons of the unfortunate Frederick V, Elector-Palatine. The monotonous life of a petty German Court was, however, but little to her taste; and, having





HENRY II DE LORRAINE, DUC DE GUISE.

From an engraving by Carrière.

inconstant as well as the most susceptible of men, having wearied of the charms of his new wife and squandered her fortune, repudiated her also and returned to France, where, now that Richelieu and Louis XIII were dead, he had no longer anything to fear. On July 25, 1643, he received his pardon and the restoration of all his estates.

On his way to Paris, he paid a visit to one of his sisters at the Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Rheims, of which she was the Superior. In virtue of this relationship and the fact that he had formerly been archbishop of the diocese, he was allowed free access to the convent, and took advantage of this privilege to lay siege to the heart of the prettiest of the nuns, to the intense indignation of the abbess, who felt obliged to send a complaint of her brother's conduct to the Regent.

On reaching Paris, Guise, so far from showing any gratitude for the pardon which the Government had accorded him, threw himself heart and soul into the faction opposed to the Court, the "*Importants*," as they were called, of whom his vanity and incapacity marked him out as a fitting leader. In December 1643, as the result of a scandal which had been spread by a new innamorata, the Duchesse de Montbazon, about the beautiful Duchesse de Longueville, sister of the Great Condé, and Maurice de Coligny, younger son of the Maréchal de Châtillon, he was challenged by Coligny to a duel. The combat took place at three o'clock in the afternoon of December 12, in the middle of the Place-Royale, which, with its environs, was then the most fashionable quarter of Paris, and created an immense sensation, the windows and balconies of the surrounding houses being crowded with excited spectators. Each persuaded her husband that their common interests would best be served by her residence in the French capital, she returned to Paris, where she divided her time between gallantry and politics, and played an important part during the Fronde. She was one of the three Frenchwomen—the other two being Madame de Longueville and Madame de Chevreuse—whom Mazarin declared were capable of governing or subverting three great kingdoms.



of the combatants was accompanied by a friend, who, in accordance with the then almost invariable custom, fought also. La Rochefoucauld relates that, as he placed himself on guard, Guise remarked to Coligny: "We are about to decide the old quarrel of our two Houses, and it will be seen what a difference there is between the blood of Guise and that of Coligny." Coligny, weak from a recent illness and at his best but an indifferent swordsman, was no match for the duke, who, like his celebrated grandfather, was an adept at all manly exercises. Guise, indeed, might easily have killed his adversary, but he refrained from doing this, and contented himself with placing him *hors de combat*. Coligny's wounds, not in themselves very serious, were, however, aggravated by his state of health and his mortification at having failed to uphold the cause of his family and that of the woman he loved; and, after lingering for some months, he died at the end of May 1644.

Guise did not figure long among the enemies of Mazarin; a new passion absorbed all his thoughts. He fell desperately in love with Suzanne de Pons, a daughter of the Marquis de la Caze and one of the Queen-mother's maids of honour. This young lady is described by the critical Tallemant as "too fat and too red in the face for her blonde hair,"<sup>1</sup> but the enamoured duke thought otherwise and "made love to her as they do in romances." His infatuation furnished great diversion to both Court and town. Half the day he spent in the company of his lady-love. When she drove out in attendance on the Queen-mother, he followed her, until the very workmen in the Rue Saint-Honoré talked of nothing else. When she went to the waters, he must needs have similar treatment; he took the same drugs in similar doses from the hands of the same apothecary, declaring that it was impossible for him to be well when she was ill, and he caused an unfortunate man who was reported to have written some satirical verses concerning

<sup>1</sup> Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*,

himself and the lady to be beaten within an inch of his life by his lackeys. The Comtesse de Bossu announced that she was coming to Paris to demand of him before the whole Court acknowledgment as his lawful wife, adding that, if he refused, she would shoot him then and there. "It is certainly true that I married you," he wrote to her, "but so many of the doctors assure me that you are not my wife that I must needs believe them."

So violent did the prince's passion for Mlle de Pons become, that he determined to get his marriage with the Comtesse de Bossu declared void, in order that he might be free to espouse his inamorata, and, with this object, appealed to the Tribunal of the Rota at Rome. The proceedings, however, threatened to last an interminable time, and at the end of October 1646, Guise, accompanied by one of his cousins, the Abbé d'Elbeuf, started for Rome, to lay his case before the Pope himself. But Innocent X, although the duke appears to have made a very favourable impression upon him, was unwilling to countenance all his scandalous conduct, and declined to interfere.

Guise was about to set out for France, whither Mlle de Pons was entreating him to return, when an adventure presented itself stranger than half-a-dozen new marriages. The people of Naples, in full revolt against the authority of Spain, invited the duke, who, as we know, was descended on the distaff side from the Angevin rulers of Naples, and whom they knew to be ready for any chance of Fortune and to possess all the qualifications which make for popularity with the multitude, to come and be their defender, "as was the Prince of Orange in Holland." To this proposition Guise lent a willing ear; indeed, nothing could have been more attractive to one of his romantic temperament than the possibility of conquering by a brilliant display of daring and resolution a throne once occupied by his ancestors and offering it to his mistress.

But, before embarking upon this undertaking, Guise considered it advisable to consult the French Government, in order to obtain its countenance, and, if possible, its material support. He assured Mazarin that his desire to accept the invitation of the Neapolitans was prompted solely by the hope of doing something for the honour and advantage of France. But the Minister, though aware that the loss of Naples would be a severe blow to the power and prestige of Spain, had little confidence in the duke's ability, and none whatever in his fidelity, and endeavoured to cool his ardour by enlarging upon the difficulties and dangers which he would have to encounter. However, the matter was left for final decision to the representatives of France at Rome, and from them Guise appears to have received some authority for his enterprise.

In November 1647, taking with him some half-dozen attendants and about 40,000 livres in money, Guise set sail in a felucca for Naples, and, escaping the Spanish squadron which was lying in the Bay, landed in safety. The Neapolitans received him with boundless enthusiasm, "as though he had been a god risen from the waves," and "burned incense under his horse's nose." Guise, on his part, believed himself already their King. He addressed despatches to the Court of France written in Italian, as though he was an independent sovereign treating with a foreign Power; placed the crown of the old monarchs of Sicily upon his coat-of-arms, and is said to have charged the Duc de Brancas to marry Mlle de Pons with a procuration in the name of "Henri, by the grace of God, King of Naples."

As for that young lady, she was so puffed up with pride that she conducted herself as though she were a royal personage, and gave herself such intolerable airs that the Queen-mother ordered her to be shut up in a convent. When this news was communicated to Guise, he addressed the following remonstrance to Mazarin :

“If the passion which I have always had for Mlle de Pons, and which is now more strong and faithful than ever, were not known to your Eminence, you might be surprised that, in the condition I am, I should write thus. But it is the effect of despair; for I confess to you that neither ambition nor the desire to immortalise myself by extraordinary actions would have embarked me in this perilous enterprise, but the sole thought that, by doing some glorious thing, I could better merit the good graces of Mlle de Pons, and, after so many perils and pains, pass tranquilly with her the rest of my days. While I hazard my life here, they maltreat and imprison the being I love. Remedy this, and you shall see that never man was so bound to you. Without this, neither fortune, nor greatness, nor life itself, are important to me.”

“Can a man who writes in this way,” wrote Mazarin, in forwarding this letter to the French Ambassador at Rome, “be capable of conducting a great enterprise?” The love-lorn adventurer possessed more capacity than Mazarin gave him credit for, and, had he been properly supported by the French Government, it is not improbable that the enterprise might have succeeded. But he received scarcely any assistance from France, and, though an expedition was sent to Naples, it sailed back again without effecting anything. Guise’s imprudent gallantries and the sovereign airs he gave himself contributed to ruin his popularity, and eventually, during a sortie that he was making against the Island of Nisida, the city was betrayed to the Spaniards. The duke endeavoured to escape towards Capua, with a handful of followers, but was captured by a detachment of the enemy on April 6, 1648. The Spaniards were so incensed against him that, but for the intervention of powerful friends and the avowal of the French Government that he was their accredited representative, they would have had him publicly executed as a brigand. As it

was, he was sent to Spain, where he was kept a prisoner for four years.

The volatile duke proved, as might be expected, a bad subject for prison life, and, in his anxiety to regain his liberty and return to the side of Mlle de Pons, he descended to the most disgraceful offers to his captors, as the Simancas Manuscripts in the French Archives prove. He offered to admit Spanish troops into France through his government of Provence or his estates on the eastern frontier. He declared himself ready to employ in the interests of Spain "his person, his influence, his life, and those of his friends." "He awaited with extraordinary impatience the intentions of his Majesty, to obey them with as much promptitude as he would bring all his life to the execution of his wishes." "His real enemies," he declared, were in France, and "he had never desired liberty save to render his Majesty considerable services, in order to avenge the ill treatment that he and his predecessors had received from the Court of France."<sup>1</sup>

For some time, Guise abased himself in vain; but at length, in the summer of 1652, at the solicitation of the Prince de Condé, then in alliance with Spain and in rebellion against his own sovereign, and in return for his solemn oath and written promise never again to undertake anything against the Spanish authority in Naples, he was liberated. Condé naturally expected that, in return for this service, the duke would throw in his lot with his party. But though, on his arrival at Bordeaux, Guise publicly announced his intention of so doing, he very speedily changed his mind and went over to the side of the Court. Nor was this all, since he subsequently had the meanness to give his vote in the Parlement in favour of Condé's condemnation for high treason.

The affection which Mlle de Pons professed for Guise had been far from disinterested, and, during his captivity in Spain, she had found consolation in the society of

<sup>1</sup> Simancas MSS, Archives Nationales, cited by Forneron.



his equerry, M. de Malicorne, whom he had charged to watch over her. The duke was furious at his inamorata's infidelity, as well he might be, seeing that he had signed a contract of marriage with her and had spent as much as 200,000 livres a year in satisfying her caprices. In revenge, he brought an action against her, claiming that she had stolen from him a pair of diamond earrings and some very valuable tapestries. The parties appeared in court and indulged in violent recriminations; and the conflicting evidence of their former relations and pledges afforded no little astonishment and amusement to the judges. In the end, the faithless Mlle de Pons gained the day and the diamond earrings and tapestries, and the duke nothing but ridicule for his pains.

Guise did not allow himself to be constrained by his promise to the Spaniards, for the sentiment of honour was as foreign to his nature as was that of gratitude; and in 1654 he set off on a second expedition to Naples, this time with the full authorisation of the French Government. Imprisonment had not sobered his character. He had made for him robes that might be appropriate for a King, and was accompanied by a band of twenty-five musicians, in imitation of those who played for the King of France. He landed at Castellamare and captured the town and fortress; but the Neapolitans showed not the smallest desire to start a movement on behalf of their former leader, and he was obliged to re-embark and return to France.

After his return from his second Neapolitan adventure, we hear but little of Guise, except in connection with the brilliant Court fêtes, in which, in his capacity of Grand Chamberlain, he naturally played a very prominent part. When, at the tourney of 1662, Condé and Guise led forward their respective troops, the courtiers cried, "See the hero of history and the hero of romance!" This description, so far as the latter was concerned, was certainly appropriate, for few men can have had more romantic careers than Henri II, Duc de Guise, who died

on June 2, 1664, at the age of fifty, without leaving any children.

Guise's younger brother, who predeceased him, Louis de Lorraine, Duc de Joyeuse, appears to have been a rather futile sort of personage, and as inconstant, though much less harmful, in his love-affairs as the head of his House. After blighting the matrimonial aspirations of two high-born damsels, Mlle d'Épernon and Mlle de Guerchy, the former of whom went to hide her chagrin in the Carmelite convent in the Rue Saint-Jacques, where she took the veil and became one of the most saintly members of that community, he eventually married François Marie de Valois d'Angoulême, by whom he had a son, Louis Joseph, born in 1656, who succeeded his too celebrated uncle as sixth Duc de Guise.

This sixth Duc de Guise was an amiable youth, who had been brought up by his aunt, Marie de Lorraine, Mlle de Guise, "a person of much intelligence, and of designs very worthy of the Guises, her ancestors."<sup>1</sup> She ruled her nephew so completely, *la Grande Mademoiselle* tells us, that never to the end of his short life did he ever venture to do anything without her consent, "which made him look rather ridiculous." In 1667, he married Élisabeth d'Orléans, daughter of Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, the younger son of Henri IV. "Being lame and deformed," says Saint-Simon, "she had preferred to marry the Duc de Guise rather than not marry at all."

Élisabeth d'Orléans was a very haughty young lady indeed, and never allowed her husband to forget for a moment that, as a grand-daughter of France, she was of superior rank to him. Every day at dinner he was obliged to hand her her serviette and to remain standing while she unfolded it, when she would order a place to be laid for him at the other end of the table and request him to sit down. Nevertheless, she appears to have been much attached to her husband, and when, three years

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*,



after their marriage, he fell ill of small-pox, she nursed him with great devotion. Notwithstanding all her care, however, the poor young prince died on July 30, 1671.

He was succeeded by his only son, François Joseph, seventh and last Duc de Guise, a child eleven months old; but the little boy was very delicate and did not survive his father five years. On his death, in May 1576, the family estates passed to his great-aunt, Marie de Lorraine, who assumed the title of Duchesse de Guise. She died unmarried in 1588, having refused the hand of Wladislas VII, King of Poland, when the greater part of the estates fell to Mlle de Montpensier and the Princesse de Condé, a descendant of Mayenne. The Hôtel de Guise, which, with its dependencies, now formed a vast enclosure bounded by the Rue de Chaume, des Quatre-Fils, Vieille-du-Temple and de Paradis, was, however, sold to the Rohan-Soubise family.

The discredit which some of the descendants of the great Guises brought upon their House during the seventeenth century was to a certain extent relieved by the military exploits of Louis de Lorraine, Comte d'Harcourt, a younger son of the Duc d'Elbeuf of the League. He was regarded as one of the best French captains of his time, and his Italian campaigns were long regarded as models of successful strategy. During the Fronde he rendered good service to the Court, reducing Normandy to obedience in 1650, while in the following year he conducted a successful campaign against the Great Condé in the South-West of France, though, it must be observed, in fairness to the latter, that his forces were very inferior in numbers to those of the Royalist general. The last of Harcourt's descendants was the Prince de Lambesc, who died in 1825, when the Guises in the male line became extinct. The title of Duc de Guise is now one of the titles of the Bourbon-Orléans family.

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